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Hitler's Generals



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BY W. E. HART



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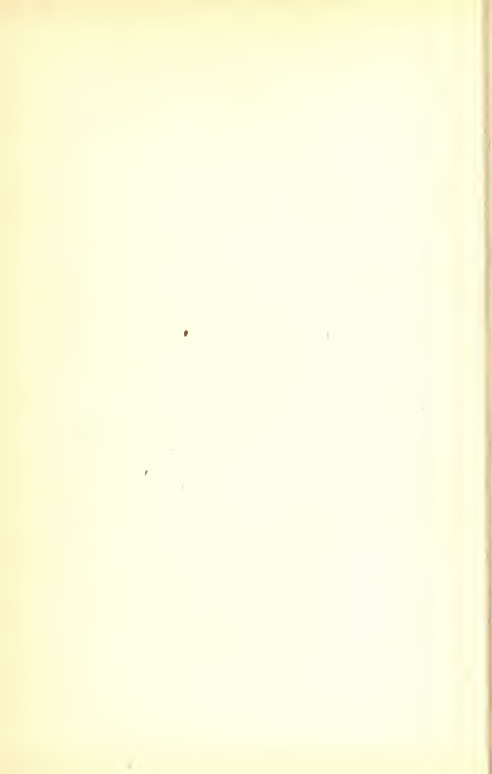
Preface

The author served as an officer in the Reichswehr under the German Republic, and had the advantage of undergoing several General Staff courses. That service having become impossible to him under Hitler, he lived in Germany for a time in active opposition to the government before finding his way as a volunteer, after war began, into the ranks of the British Army, from which he was invalided out.

Here he reviews the careers of Hitler's generals in the light of their environment and their mental training, portraying most of them from personal contact either with the men themselves or with officers of their immediate circle. He presents their history under Hitler and in Hitler's war with intimate glimpses that should make clearer the governing influence upon the nation and the results, all unforeseen, of Hitler's rise upon them.

This personal view, it is hoped, will be a corroboratory background to the documented history of Germany's rearmament from 1919 and of the four years of the present war, much of which lies in forgotten or unread official and biographical records.

These narratives were conceived and drafted in English, but their completed form is due, like that of the author's first book (*Landmarks of Modern Strategy*), to the collaboration of Mr. Walter Scott.



Contents

Preface	vii
I Colonel General Baron Werner von Fritsch	i
II Field Marshal Karl Rudolf Gerd von Rundstedt	39
III Field Marshal Erwin Eugen Johannes Rommel	69
IV Field Marshal Erhard Milch	92
V Field Marshal Walther Heinrich Alfred Herman von Brauchitsch	111
VI Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel	145
VII Field Marshal Fedor von Bock	154
VIII Grand Admiral Karl Doenitz	183
IX Admiral Erich Raeder	194
Index	215



Illustrations

	FACING PAGE
Colonel General Baron Werner von Fritsch	4
Field Marshal Karl Rudolf Gerd von Rundstedt	40
Field Marshal Erwin Eugen Johannes Rommel	72
Field Marshal Erhard Milch	96
Field Marshal Walther Heinrich Alfred Herman von Brauchitsch	112
Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel	148
Field Marshal Fedor von Bock	156
Grand Admiral Karl Doenitz	192
Admiral Erich Raeder	192



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Hitler's Generals

Colonel General Baron Werner von Fritsch

He who sups with the Devil needs a long spoon.

OLD ENGLISH PROVERB.

Von Fritsch was a typical representative of his class. Of medium height and heavy build, square-faced and always monocled, too consciously arrogant to be deeply impressive, Von Fritsch's physical make-up reflects an intelligence at once intense and lacking in imagination. Without suppleness of brain or body, he has tireless energy without the imaginative foresight that might have enabled him to avoid his violent but not ignoble end.

He faces the inferior officer under his command with a frigid expression and an air of remote superiority. Conscious of his rank and position, he never relaxes before men and N.C.O.s. With civilians he has two methods, one for the man who is of no use to him, the other for the man who now or in the future may serve his purpose. The first is less to him than the smallest private; he can scarcely endure without annoyance the presence of so useless a creature in his scheme of things. To the private, the N.C.O., and the junior officer the cold face is never indifferent; without interest in the person, it recognizes a unit in the stern profession on which all are bound together. The civilian as such is out of bounds; he can never be admitted into the circle of the elect, even in thought, and still less with a friendly manner. To the civilian whom he wishes to make use of, however, Von Fritsch becomes the nonchalant grand seigneur. This to him is diplomacy, and when it seems worth while to play the

part he could say: "We are ALL gentlemen, after all. Now let's talk to each other like that." As a Prussian general (or, as you might think from his manner, a demigod among mortals), he can hardly be friendly, but he stoops so far as to be benevolent. In this mood he has tricks that soon become familiar to those who know him. He will expose a human side of himself by pretending to have been a "naughty boy" (not without some foundation). He will be confidential and relate little anecdotes that could not be told in the drawing room. In this way he believes he is creating an atmosphere of confidence without himself giving anything away. When he believes he has succeeded he will suddenly reveal his original motive. The man who has now been "taken into his confidence" is expected to feel the duty of a friend to tell all he knows or to act as requested. This kind of thing is to Von Fritsch "trying one's charm on somebody." If his victim refuses to be overawed or dazzled—as, of course, must happen occasionally even in Germany—Von Fritsch shows how little of the grand seigneur he really is, for all vestige of dignity disappears in commonplace rudeness. But with a German reared in the atmosphere of awe in the presence of the officer, it is seldom so transparent as it will seem here where men must be free or die, "Who speak the tongue that Shakespeare spake."

Werner von Fritsch was born on August 4, 1880, at Benrath, in the district of Düsseldorf in the Rhineland, a son of the retired Lieutenant General Baron Georg von Fritsch and his wife, Adelheid von Bodelschwingh. The father's income permitted the young Von Fritsch to have a good education at the grammar schools at Düsseldorf, Posen, and Hanau. His mother's family formed a pillar of the Evangelical Church in Germany, and their influence was a powerful element in the molding of the young man's character. They were philanthropists and had founded a home for cripples and epileptics that was known all over Germany. At that time religious education was commonly part of

the curriculum of any cadet who intended to become an officer in the Imperial German Army, but contact with the Church was often not much more than a matter of good form. With Werner von Fritsch this side of his education went deeper and, later on, dictated his conduct at critical moments of his career.

On September 21, 1898, he entered the Grand-Ducal Hessian Field Artillery Regiment No. 25 at Darmstadt. His father, a nobleman of standing, commanded the aristocratic 15th Cavalry Brigade, and the family was substantial financially, so the young Von Fritsch could have entered any crack guards regiment of the Imperial German Army. He chose to join an artillery regiment, and thus to take almost the only opportunity inside the German Army of that time to acquire technical knowledge. During the nineteenth century, especially its later years, there was rapid development of the artillery arm.

By 1900 Von Fritsch was a second lieutenant, and nine years later a full lieutenant. But he had caught the attention of his regimental chief in 1907 and in the autumn of that year was transferred to the War Academy, where he studied until July 1910. Here he received the preliminary training for General Staff duties. The final appointment to the General Staff of the Army was given him in 1911, while he was still a first lieutenant. By that time the technical side of the artillery branch of the Army had ceased to satisfy him, and in 1913 he obtained a transfer to the exceedingly small army air branch. He was one of the first serving German Imperial officers to take the certificate of air observer. In those days the air observer was more concerned with directing the pilot than with the larger job of reconnaissance for the ground forces. Soon Von Fritsch saw the great possibilities for air observation, and from several memoranda he wrote on the subject his superiors drew up a directive for collaboration between air observers and ground reconnaissance.

In 1913, when he became a captain, he was transferred to the Great General Staff of the entire Imperial armed forces. Now he had the power to use his wide practical experience in the Army's many ramifications, and by the outbreak of World War I his

reputation in the inner circle of the Great General Staff was assured. Throughout the entire war of 1914-18 he served as a General Staff officer, first on the General Staff of the 4th Army, and later, with greater powers, on the staff of the 47th Reserve Division. Exceptionally studious and industrious, it was in the hard way, as he afterward proudly said, and not, as was usual for higher officers in that division, by intrigue or through social influence, that he won his next step as First General Staff officer to the famous 1st Guards Division. In this position he criticized on several occasions the rather unskilled handling of these crack troops by their commanding general, who relied more upon the high morale of his guardsmen than on the skill of his General Staff officers.

Having preferred important staff appointments to higher rank, Von Fritsch did not become a major until 1917, and with that rank he joined the 10th Army Corps as a General Staff officer. Toward the end of the war he was employed in the reorganization of the Army's air force, with which the Allied air supremacy—in particular the great increase of the R.F.C.—had played havoc.

Less simply defined than these steps in his profession was his increasing consciousness of the political influences that governed the general direction of the German armed forces at their headquarters and impinged upon the mind of every ambitious officer. He gained a deep inside knowledge about many of the larger aims of the German Government, the Supreme Command, and the General Staff. He had found an able coach, while a General Staff officer throughout World War I, in Colonel Max Bauer, who was known inside German General Staff circles as "the shadow behind Ludendorff." Bauer, like Von Fritsch, was an artillery specialist, professionally concerned with the technical development of the Army, but his interests went beyond that. He headed many conferences on war economy and showed Von Fritsch how to handle politicians. Later, during his career in the Reichswehr, Von Fritsch spoke of Bauer as his teacher in other things than strategy.



Acme News Pictures, Inc

COLONEL GENERAL BARON WERNER VON FRITSCH, military genius, who fell foul of the Nazis and was eliminated during the Polish campaign.

At the conclusion of the Armistice, Von Fritsch joined the 4th Reserve Corps, which, under the command of General Count Rudiger von der Goltz, carried on the war in the Baltic provinces. Von Fritsch became chief of the General Staff of the corps, which was made up from remnants of elite forces of the old Imperial Army. The operations carried out by Von der Goltz would have been impossible without the assistance of the Socialist War Minister of the Republic, Noske. Von Fritsch noted the assistance given to the aristocratic general by a former Socialist firebrand, an association he would have thought impossible until a few months before, and he was not long in drawing the conclusion that there was hope for the re-establishment of a limited armed national force.

At many conferences between the emissaries of Noske and the leaders of the 4th Reserve Corps Von Fritsch saw in practice how even a left-wing Minister put the interest of the Army before his professed political principles. The Inter-Allied Commission in the Baltic States, headed by the French General Niessel, put an end to the semiprivate, semiofficial existence of this corps. General Niessel made the personal acquaintance of Von Fritsch and later recorded his conclusions. In his book *L'Evacuation des Pays Baltiques par les Allemands—Contribution à l'étude de la mentalité Allemande* (editor, Charles Lavanzelles, Paris, Limoges, Nancy, 1935) General Niessel describes a meeting between the staff of the 4th Reserve Corps, then under the command of General von Eberhardt, who was commander in chief of the 7th Army during World War I, and the Allied Commission. General Niessel writes: "His chief of staff, Major von Fritsch, is young, arrogant, and extremely self-confident. It seems that he is not at all afraid to play hide-and-seek with the truth and, even worse, to evade uncomfortable questions and to mislead the Allied Commission. He has all the professional advantages and all the faults of character of the Prussian General Staff officer, who very often considers himself superior—and rightly too—to the ordinary mortal." Niessel further complains that figures on the strength of the corps were proved to be false, and at one of the

meetings he exclaimed, "These figures sweat untruthfulness."

Though the service in the 4th Reserve Corps in the Baltic provinces usually gained no laurels for officers of that formation because of its rather private-illegal character (the Berlin government of that time could only semiofficially take an interest in that corps), Von Fritsch had recognition in being transferred to the Reserve Group Command No. 3 for a short time. In 1920 he was employed to build up the organization of the young Reichswehr Ministry until 1922. Here he had his first contact with the commander in chief of the young Reichswehr, General Hans von Seeckt, who was impressed by his wide knowledge and resourcefulness, and with the patience and unswerving concentration upon which he could call in pursuit of his purpose. In 1922 Von Fritsch received his first full command and took over Battery II of the Artillery Regiment No. 5 in Ulm in Bavaria. He was gazetted a lieutenant colonel in February 1923, but his patent dated back from November 15, 1922, a ruse contrived by his friends in the Reichswehr Ministry to enable him to meet debts incurred by his lavish way of living in Berlin.

Transferred for several years to the 1st Division in Königsberg in East Prussia as chief of staff, Von Fritsch studied the military questions of eastern Germany as created by the new run of the frontiers with Poland, not, we may suppose, without some anticipation. From this staff appointment he returned in 1927 to the Reichswehr Ministry as colonel and "departmental chief." Actually Von Fritsch joined the camouflaged General Staff of the Reichswehr, which was prohibited by the Treaty of Versailles. He worked under the direction of another General Staff officer, Von Blomberg, but Von Blomberg was not a man of energetic mind, and his character had perhaps more charm than strength. Von Fritsch replaced him fully.

On taking up his office, Von Fritsch was presented with difficulties that had been left to him to straighten out. Questions had been raised in the Reichstag by Socialist and Democratic deputies who were not satisfied with the reports given to them by the Reichswehr Minister, Herr Gessler, in explanation of the budget

demands for the Army and Navy. In February 1927 Herr Stücklen, Socialist deputy and reporter for the Budget Committee of the Reichstag on Army and Navy estimates, put forward these questions:

1. Why has the budget increased by thirty million marks though the number of men and the strength of the material in the Reichswehr remains steady?

2. Why has an army of 100,000 men to be scattered over 127 garrisons?

3. Why does the Reichswehr still list 40,212 horses, though only 10,000 men belong to cavalry regiments?

4. Why are funds "transferable"? (Forty-eight per cent of the 1927 budget for the Army and Navy was "transferable," that is, to be transferred from one branch of the Army to another at the discretion of the army command.)

5. Why does the Reichswehr Ministry—which has never given any signs of economy—refuse to enlist the services of a political under-secretary? (Herr Stücklen gave here the immediate answer: Because it relieves the generals of the compulsion of a supervisor, and without such an officer the entire Reichswehr is relieved of any compulsion to answer uncomfortable political questions at all.)

But Herr Stücklen went further than that. He confronted the Reichswehr Ministry with concrete facts showing that the General Staff officers in the Ministry had completely disregarded their obligations to the government and were consistently lying to the representatives of the German Republic. He used information that in a rough form had been published by the Silesian newspaper *Breslauer Volkswacht*, a Socialist organ that represented the views of the president (the speaker) of the Reichstag, Herr Loebe. Herr Stücklen had investigated an accusation made by this paper and had found out that, contrary to the restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles and contrary to the official organization of the Reichswehr, there existed forty "district officers" in Lower Silesia who had been ordered to push forward illegal recruiting for reserves for the armed forces. A complete training

center existed for these illegal formations at Neuhammer. These officers had come straight from the nationalistic organization the Stahlhelm, but they resigned their membership of that organization as soon as they took up their duties in the Reichswehr. There were, for example, in the town of Brieg, an officer who had resigned twenty-four hours after his appointment from the Stahlhelm; in Wohlau a captain who, though he retained officially no connections with the Stahlhelm, attended the evening rallies of the local groups and asked for recruits; in Liegnitz an illegal officer who had told the recruits that every Silesian German had to be ready against Polish aggression.

Herr Stücklen further stated in his confidential memorandum that although the employers' association of Silesia had given large funds to these officers, money had been transferred from the Reichswehr to the Lower Silesian district for the same purpose.

At the same time the Democratic deputy, Baron Hartmann von Richthofen, had put before the Reichswehr Minister equally disturbing questions on the composition of the Officers' Corps of the Reichswehr, querying the stability of the corps and its attitude toward the Republican constitution. Baron von Richthofen knew the attitude of the Prussian nobleman well, for he had moved in that circle as a noble before he became a Democratic deputy. The figures which he put forward were eloquent:

of 596 cavalry officers	265	were	nobles
" 724 Reichswehr Ministry officers	162	"	"
" 1,512 infantry officers	265	"	"
" 589 artillery officers	61	"	"

The total proportion of nobles among the officers of the entire Reichswehr was 20 per cent. In the higher ranks the proportion was even greater:

of 42 generals	25	were	nobles
" 105 colonels	45	"	"

Baron von Richthofen added that for nearly ten thousand members of the Reichswehr there were nearly a thousand officers,

nearly three hundred warrant officers, and three to four thousand petty officers. The obvious discrepancy between the number of officers and N.C.O.s needed for ten thousand men and the actual figures was subjected to the baron's acid criticism.

Herr Creuzburg, another deputy, completed this indictment by comparing the monies that had been spent on the upkeep of the old Imperial General Staff of 1913 and the 1927 army command of the Reichswehr. The old Imperial General Staff was able to administer and direct the vast organization of the active peacetime army and its reserve formations with a staff of 619 officers at a cost of the equivalent of £240,000. The Reichswehr Ministry needed for an army—for which it claimed to have no reserves and only a peacetime strength of 100,000—922 officers and spent nearly half a million pounds.

The entire Reichswehr Ministry was left gasping. The former commander in chief, Colonel General Hans von Seeckt, who had been sacked because he had permitted members of the House of Hohenzollern to attend two maneuvers of the Reichswehr, had dreaded the exposure which he had long felt hanging over him like the sword of Damocles. The new commander in chief, Colonel General Wilhelm Heye, was completely at a loss. He could neither answer the charges nor defend himself and his officers, nor was he subsequently able to supply the responsible minister with material upon which a defense could be based. Here Von Fritsch showed what a soldier-politician he had become. He did not disdain a personal canvass of the critics, whom he treated with a familiar mixture of cajolery and admonition. They were reminded of their "eternal and unceasing duty toward the Fatherland." He neglected no means that might secure the militarist end, and there were many strings to pull. Social pressure, warnings against too outspoken criticism of the Army, the patriotic appeal so confusing to the German democrat, all were brought to bear with the final result that the army and navy budget was passed. The reductions forced upon the Reichswehr administration were derisory (£225,000 for the Army, £112,000 for the Navy).

Now Colonel Von Fritsch was able to continue the work which he himself has described as the "heritage of Von Seeckt." This heritage consisted of plans based on the most efficient use of the reduced armed forces of the German Reich in the event of war. Von Fritsch worked on plans that provided for an offensive in the east and a temporary defensive in the west. The plan for Poland, which has to be accredited almost exclusively to the then Colonel von Fritsch, was ready by 1928.

Under this plan heavy attacks on the Polish Army were to cause the collapse of the Polish State. The first blow was to be concentrated in the area of Deutsch-Krone-Schneidemühl-Frankfurt-an-der-Oder. The immediate aim was to cut the vital railway Gdynia-Katowitz, and so paralyze the great chain of communications upon which the Polish Army would depend in its march of approach. The German concentrated group was to be protected in the north by weak cavalry and in the immediate south by weak motorized formations. A second blow was to be delivered simultaneously from the East Prussian sectors of Deutsch-Eylau-Marienwerder-Rosenberg, reaching deep into Poland and joining the first assault group in the area of Graudenz-Thorn. Speed was essential for the movement of both groups, and Von Fritsch hoped that the strong Polish Pomerelle Army would be cut off and exposed to annihilation. If sufficient forces were still available, a third, though weaker, assault group could deploy from Silesia in the sector of Kreuzburg and strike through Petrikau against Lodz. The detailed timing given to the divisions employed showed that Von Fritsch demanded a maximum of speed in order to strike before the full power of the Polish regular and reserve armies could be brought to bear in defense. With little essential change this was the plan executed in 1939.

Von Fritsch planned to fight defensively in the west and to leave southern Germany without any cover except for weak forces to be stationed along the lower Weser and in southern Saxony. After the conclusion of his Polish campaign Von Fritsch intended to force the Reich Government to offer peace terms to

France, promising the reinstatement of the Polish State, the evacuation of Poland by the German Army, and permission for the re-establishment of a limited Polish Army. The peace would also provide for a withdrawal of the French troops, and in return Germany was to be allowed a peacetime armed strength of its own choice. In his plan Von Fritsch used material provided by General Wetzell, who in World War I had been chief of operations under Ludendorff and who held a similar position in the Reichswehr. Wetzell had some original ideas of his own, but these were discarded by Von Fritsch, who had no difficulty with Wetzell's successor in the Reichswehr, Colonel von Blomberg.

There was criticism of this plan by General Staff officers inside the Reichswehr, who pointed out that the originator of the plan had only limited field experience and knew little about the conduct of smaller formations. In their view Von Fritsch was too optimistic. In discussions with his superiors Von Fritsch was able to sweep away these criticisms with arguments provided by the details of the plan. These demanded the utmost speed, for which the highly trained Reichswehr of that time was well adapted.

Having completed his work in the camouflaged General Staff, Von Fritsch studied the conditions of the contemplated campaign on the spot. He became chief of the Artillery Regiment No. 2, and in quick succession Artillery Leader II at the 2nd Army District in Stettin, a district immediately involved in his plan. On November 1, 1930, he asked for transfer to the 1st Artillery Division in Frankfurt-an-der-Oder, where as commander of the 1st Cavalry Division there he held the key position. By that time his ideas dominated the mind of almost every officer inside the General Staff, and his work was acknowledged in June 1932 by his promotion to the rank of lieutenant general. With the arrest in the same year of the Socialist Government in Berlin, and the assumption of the chancellorship by Franz von Papen, the way was opened to Von Fritsch and his friends to achieve the rearmament and expansion of the German armed forces without a campaign against Poland. For the closer control

of this immediate aim Von Fritsch was made commander in the 3rd Army District with garrison in Berlin, the Reich's capital. He had been prepared to be ruthless, if that were necessary for his nationalistic purpose, but now abandoned the international crime of a surprise attack on Poland and turned to political means that promised success for his purpose at less cost.

The man at first chosen to carry through the expansion of the Army by the new method was General von Hammerstein-Equord, commander in chief of the Reichswehr under the War Minister, Colonel General Werner von Blomberg, Von Fritsch's former chief in the camouflaged General Staff department of 1927. But in Von Hammerstein-Equord, the arch-Junker, there was nothing of the politician. Never tired of criticizing the first Hitler Cabinet, he accused Hitler of driving toward a premature war while army expansion was still under way. His strictures on the arming of the storm-trooper divisions and guards were so blunt and severe as to defeat their purpose. He antagonized Hitler at a time when the future dictator was still willing temporarily to compromise with the officer class, and his career was brief. With the appointment of Von Fritsch as commander in chief of the Reichswehr on February 1, 1934, Hitler thought he had found the man to whom concessions could be made.

Von Fritsch, holding the same purpose as Von Hammerstein-Equord with a larger view, was fully aware of the causes of Von Hammerstein-Equord's failure. He knew how to wait for his opening, and in the first few weeks he avoided the issue. Then toward April of the same year he was able to force Hitler's hand. In dealing with the crisis over the storm troopers he used an appeal that with Hitler has never failed—the security of the Führer's life. Up to that time it had been quite obvious to Hitler, Goering, Hess, and several other leading personalities inside the Nazi party that Roehm, the chief of staff of the storm troopers and the security echelon (SA and SS), was preparing to arm the masses of his organization. They were satisfied that this armament was intended for the benefit of the country and that Roehm genuinely believed that his storm troopers could be used as a

militia in the expansion of the armed forces of the future greater German Reich. With Von Fritsch's new argument against this belief, the intelligence service of the Reichswehr procured documents showing that Roehm was preparing to use his armed storm troopers against the existing government, and that he had a plan for rebellion during which "the Führer would be shot by accident." With this revelation the purpose that had been thwarted by Von Hammerstein-Equord's crude methods was accomplished.

It has never been established whether these documents produced by Von Fritsch were genuine or not, but they were the death of Roehm and his friends. While the executions—or murders, for there was no pretense of legalized form—were going on, officers of Von Fritsch's intimate circle played with the idea of a *coup d'état* of their own. Von Fritsch dismissed this idea, but took care that it came to the knowledge of Hitler via Goering, who was careful at that moment to assume a more "neutral" role. This plan provided for a cabinet to be headed by either Von Fritsch or Von Blomberg (as a puppet); the Foreign Minister was to be Herr von Nadow, a diplomat who had been an active peacetime officer in the German Army, and General von Hammerstein, the Minister of War. The immediate arrest of Himmler, Heydrich, Goebbels, and Darré was demanded. Darré, the Minister of Agriculture, was regarded with displeasure by the Junker class because of his hereditary estate laws which brought the landowning class under the strict supervision of the state. One of the laws provided that if a person was "unfit to till soil" the state could appoint another man, not as administrator but as owner, while the former owner stood a good chance of ending up in a lunatic asylum. Darré was fully aware of the animosity he had aroused among Von Fritsch's friends, and that explains why he took every opportunity to discredit the commander in chief of the armed forces. The civil administration was to be handed over to the industrial leaders of the Rhenanian and Ruhr districts. For all this, the slogan to be addressed to Hindenburg was "Save Germany for the fourth time." A new

and strong motive for the execution of this plan was found in the assassination of General von Schleicher and his wife.

Having put an end to this halfhearted plot by revealing it, and so saved Hitler, in all appearance, at the most dangerous crisis of his political life, Von Fritsch exacted his price. He secured a definite assurance that a repetition of the "playing-soldier" policy of the late Captain Roehm would not be permitted. Hitler wrote a letter to the Minister of War, Colonel General von Blomberg, shortly after the election in August 1934, in which he said: "I will always consider it my duty to stand for the existence and inviolability of the forces and to anchor the Army as the only bearer of weapons in the nation." This was accepted by Von Fritsch as the final check upon any Nazi leaders who might look at the Reichswehr generals with jealous eyes.

This apparently decisive internal political success emboldened Von Fritsch to exploit further his already strong position in the government. In November 1934 he impugned the good intentions of Hitler and his closer Nazi friends in a political question that was quite outside the province of the commander in chief of the armed forces. It had come to the knowledge of higher Reichswehr officers that the Nazi party was about to force the hand of Hitler in his dealings with heavy industry and the large banks. Party economists thought that the time had come when private enterprise should be restricted to the Reich, and that foreign assets, shares, and banking accounts in the hands of German individuals should be handed over to the government. Leaders in finance and industry, alarmed for their special interests, turned for help to Von Fritsch, whose strong position after the Roehm breach they recognized. He took up their cause, made strong representations to Hitler, and appeared to prevail. Hitler instructed the Reich Government officers concerned to issue strong denials of the party scheme. An argument put forward by the Nazi party chiefs in favor of this new measure of control was that with freedom of private finance the Reichswehr would have the benefit of larger funds for foreign intelligence purposes, while Von Fritsch, for his part, recognized that this

intelligence work would be largely handled by the foreign department of the party itself and various other "camouflaged" organizations all over the world that were directly or indirectly under the party's control. As more recent history shows, Von Fritsch's success was temporary, and the grip which the party octopus sought to gain over the whole Reich and its affairs abroad was only delayed.

For the time, however, Von Fritsch seemed to represent the country's only bulwark against the Nazi party inside Germany. The illegal "German Freedom party" saw in him a friend of their cause and quoted him in their secret pamphlets, circulated through Berlin and other larger cities of the Reich. For the commander in chief of the Reichswehr such friends were extremely embarrassing, and on many occasions he rebuffed them with flat denials. But the small, illegal anti-Nazi movements inside Germany were at that time not easily discouraged, and when it became known that Von Fritsch had had a hand in stopping the party from acquiring control over German foreign assets they carried their endorsement so far that in Berlin it came to an open outburst, though on a small scale. During a wrestling match in the famous Circus Busch in Berlin a group of three hundred men suddenly stood up from their seats and shouted, "Down with the hunger government—down with the system!" Special police cordons were rushed to the Circus Busch, and all the demonstrators were arrested. They were subsequently subjected to the worst form of inquisition by the Gestapo, and the chief of the Gestapo, Heinrich Himmler, thought that he had evidence that the demonstration had been encouraged by the attitude of the commander in chief of the Reichswehr. Without informing Hitler, Himmler now ordered his second in command, Reinhard Heydrich, to collect further evidence of the disloyalty of Von Fritsch, and a few months later he approached Hitler with a bundle of documents and a number of witnesses who were willing to swear that Von Fritsch had committed immoral acts. Himmler had miscalculated, for Hitler generally knew the men who could serve him at a given moment. He re-

buked Himmler and dismissed the accusations with the laconic answer, "I need Fritsch's cool nerves for the declaration of the independence of the German rearmament and the reoccupation of the Rhineland. Burn the documents and shoot the witnesses." Himmler, however, did nothing of the kind. He kept his documents, and instead of shooting the witnesses put them into a concentration camp for safekeeping, giving Reinhard Heydrich further secret instructions to watch closely the movements and contacts of the commander in chief.

From the beginning of the year 1935 Von Fritsch concentrated even more than usual on purely military problems. He was called upon to decide between higher German military leaders who could not come to an agreement among themselves about the final composition of the expanded German Army. As in the plan for Poland, Von Fritsch himself had demanded, for the execution of his plans of operation in a future war, the essential of all modern strategy, speed. There were a number of officers—known inside the Reichswehr organization as "the technical chaps"—who were willing to satisfy this demand for an army composed almost exclusively of tanks, mechanized and motorized formations. Their outspoken advocates were Generals Lutz, commander in chief of the Panzer forces, Guderian, Panzer specialist, and other higher officers, among them Nehring and many General Staff officers. Even such generals as Von Reichenau and Von Bock, whose names were attached to conceptions in which tank formations were considered as only part of a modern army, now favored "the technical chaps." On the other hand, a strong party of highly experienced generals opposed these drastic changes in the course of rearmament. Of these chief were the senior general of the Reichswehr, Gerd von Rundstedt, the defense expert, Ritter von Leeb, the future chief of the General Staff, General Beck, the commanding general of District II, General Blaskowitz, and many others. It was left to Von Fritsch to decide. He found a compromise that hurt nobody, and satisfied more or less every general's demands. But generally he held to the view that the efficiency of the compara-

tively small army which he commanded at that time would suffer by a too rapid expansion, while its rapid expansion was categorically demanded by Hitler for his future plans.

Hitler's first aim was to test the will of the democracies to put a halt to the rapid expansion inside and outside Germany. With this purpose he proposed to reoccupy the Rhineland and to announce a complete and open repudiation of the Treaty of Versailles by declaring the "*wehrfreiheit*" (sovereignty over the expansion of armaments inside Germany). Von Fritsch made it quite clear that he would not risk the development of the armed forces by any such ambitious undertakings until he was sure that there would be no fighting. He agreed to back Hitler to the utmost in a policy of bluff, but thought it impossible to challenge the combined French and British forces in 1935. This pact between Hitler and Von Fritsch held good, and Von Fritsch set to work. While Hitler continued in his speeches to make threatening appeals to foreign powers, half asking them for favors, half menacing them with war, Von Fritsch devised his own methods for probing the spirit of resistance of the people across the western border.

The first opportunity was given to him in January 1935 during the plebiscite in the Saar, when the French Government had sent seventy-five French Foreign Legionnaires to the Saar to record their votes in favor of France. The commander in chief of the Reichswehr sent an agent into the Saar to deal with these men. They were promised four hundred pounds each and quick promotion inside the Reichswehr if they would vote for Germany and then ostentatiously desert the French Army to join Hitler's. Sixty-seven accepted these offers; only eight refused. The French authorities did nothing.

The next step in this "reconnaissance campaign" was to send serving officers and men of the German Army to the Bavarian Palatinate as "visitors." These visits were cloaked in the most ingenious camouflage. Here is an example of what happened shortly before the formal reoccupation of the Rhineland by the German Army. One Sunday morning in 1935 twenty-two men

of the 2nd Company of the 21st Infantry Regiment, in full uniform, paid a visit to the small city of Landau, in the Palatinate, and were received by the local mayor and a deputation of the population under the very noses of the French border officials. They stayed in this town against all rules and regulations of the Treaty of Versailles and, contrary to the most solemn assurances given to France, visited the barracks of the old 18th Bavarian Infantry Regiment, which had been garrisoned in this town before the war of 1914-18. Paris maintained complete silence about this incident. Timid protests raised by newspapers and deputies of such French frontier cities as Strasbourg and Mulhouse were immediately answered by the Reichswehr in a fashion that showed the tortuous and ruthless mind that inspired these schemes. It was represented to the French people that the 2nd Company of the 21st Infantry Regiment was simply carrying the tradition of the former 18th Bavarian Infantry Regiment, and that it was perfectly in order for these men to visit the former barracks of their predecessors in the old Imperial Army. Their intention, Berlin explained, was merely to keep up the spirit of tradition inside the Army of the Third Reich. These and other carefully arranged incidents, which were referred to by Von Fritsch as "reconnaissance in the field of foreign policy," convinced him that the great throw could be risked, and the Rhineland was reoccupied.

So far Von Fritsch has advanced almost in step with Hitler. Their differences are differences of form and the order of events, for it is upon these that personal standing depends. On the one hand is the self-conscious exercise of authority by the head of an army jealous for its pre-eminence in the state; on the other hand, the radical methods of a man without tradition who grouped every purpose around his insistence on personal predominance. Von Fritsch thinks first of the Army, Hitler of the party upon which he depends. In their national and international dealings they were alike amoral. With Von Fritsch no more than with Hitler did the notion of honor forbid either a policy of deception toward Allied inspectors to whom the German

Government was pledged, or the circumventing of the German Government itself, or the crime of a burglarious attack on Poland.

Von Fritsch's arrogance and self-confidence, as we have seen, were remarked upon by the French general, Niessel. He is now conscious of his office and sets a limit to Hitler's. He gives special orders for the conduct of officers and men when confronting Hitler. Instead of their addressing the supreme war lord with the party form, "Heil Hitler," he directs that "*Heil mein Führer!*" is enough, more appropriate to their own dignity. The sting of this insistence on the Army's distinctive place in the state is not lost, we may be sure, upon Himmler and his friends, who have not forgotten the end of their first round with the commander in chief.

The successful occupation of the Rhineland exalted Hitler in the eyes of his party as in his own, and Von Fritsch's bearing stiffened with his consciousness of their triumph. Hitler's calculations were confirmed in the sight of all men. The democracies, so recently conquerors, had now no will to hold their own; their guns, as was said later of the League of Nations, would not go off. When Saarbrücken was occupied Hitler appeared in splendor and received the personal homages of his main leaders, Himmler, Hess, Ley, and others. It was a scene in which all moved round Hitler, and those, like local Nazi leaders, not in his immediate circle strained to catch a glimpse of him. All this exhilarated Hitler as wine would other men, until the atmosphere of adulation was broken in upon by the sudden arrival in the market square of a field-gray Mercedes car with Von Fritsch and one or two staff officers. Von Fritsch jumped out, advanced with cold face and erect figure toward the Führer, gave a short military salute, ignored the outstretched hand with which he was greeted, made a quick and brief report stating that everything was quiet on the immediate frontier, sharply saluted again, turned on his heel, walked to his car, and drove off. It was a chilling interlude of which the effect remained to cramp the relations of the two men.

With the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 Von Fritsch saw an admirable opportunity to test the efficiency of the new German Army, its technical inventions and modern strategical conceptions, but nothing more. The first reinforcements that reached General Franco from Germany were dispatched with this limited idea. As it happened, the advance guards of the Condor Legion proved none too successful against an opponent who did not even command a fraction of the modern equipment Berlin was able to send to Franco. When Von Fritsch was pressed for fresh reinforcements for Spain he evinced what his enemies called a "decidedly non-interventionist complex," and in the salons of Dr. Goebbels and Field Marshal Goering satires were heard about the Western democracies' best non-interventionist supporter, Von Fritsch.

Though this tension inside the leading political and military circles of the German Reich was carefully guarded behind official reserve, the French newspaper *L'Œuvre* was able to publish, in November 1936, an article which, very much to the surprise of the people concerned in Germany, was able to describe the civilian side of the Nazi Government, together with the two generals, Von Blomberg and Von Reichenau, and, of course, the younger army officers, as one hundred per cent for intervention. Decidedly against this "adventure," as they called it, were Von Fritsch, Von Rundstedt, and the chief of the German Navy, Admiral Erich Raeder. It was further asserted in *L'Œuvre* that Von Fritsch had tendered his resignation. This exposure acted in Berlin like a bombshell. Hitler was furious. Something had happened which he called "an indiscretion bordering on high treason."

Knowing the mood of his supreme war lord, Himmler thought that the time had come to present Hitler again with further charges against the commander in chief. These reports had been accumulated by Reinhard Heydrich, who had been busy on his original commission to spy on the commander in chief of the Army. Himmler reported this time that after the Nuremberg party rally Von Fritsch attended a banquet given to all foreign

military attachés who had attended the rally, and that during the speeches Von Fritsch had raised his glass toward the Soviet Russian military attaché and proposed a toast to the Red Army. Himmler further procured material for an allegation that the commander in chief was secretly involved in political matters that were beyond his province and aimed at keeping contact with certain anti-Nazi elements fostered by political refugees of former German nationality in foreign countries. Hitler did not this time give orders to Himmler as he had done before. He advised his chief of the Secret Police to lie low, but in his Reichstag speech in January 1937 he made a pointed reference to the material raked up by his handy men. He would never, he said, be found "dining and wining" with Bolsheviks. There is a postscript to this second attempt of Himmler's to overthrow the commander in chief. This is an allegation that Himmler managed to smuggle into the hands of the Soviet Russian Ambassador in Berlin a report that the Soviet marshal, Tuchachevsky, had had direct contact with Von Fritsch. Heydrich later claimed that Tuchachevsky was executed on the strength of the material in this report, but these claims remain unconfirmed.

The expansion of the German armed forces had made rapid progress by this time, and together with the reserve formations in existence, provision was made that in case of war the existing companies would be the nuclei of future regiments, while regiments would be developed into divisions and divisions into corps. Von Fritsch could be well content with the progress he had made, and obviously it was these achievements in the military sphere that led Hitler, as supreme commander, to refrain from the action against Von Fritsch that was demanded by the extremists inside the Nazi party. Hitler, always sensitive to what stung his vanity, was present on an occasion when Von Fritsch let fall one of his satirical remarks. It was in 1937, when the golden emblem of the Nazi party, the emblem issued to the first hundred thousand members of the party, was given to Admiral Raeder; the Secretary of State, Dr. Meissner; the Prussian Finance Minister, Dr. Popitz; Herr Funk, then still in the

Propaganda Ministry; General Erhard Milch, Secretary in the Air Ministry, and Von Fritsch himself. Not all these gentlemen now rewarded had had the good luck to join the Nazi party in its early stages. Of Erhard Milch's golden emblem Von Fritsch acidly remarked, "Old Granddaddy Milch would turn in his grave at the Jewish cemetery of Breslau if he could see Aryanized Erhard with this distinction on his breast." The assembly present froze into silence; the one thing that could be heard was Von Fritsch's chuckle at his own gibe. Hitler, it is reported, seemed to be on the verge of one of his hysterical outbursts, but the tension relaxed in face of Von Fritsch's bluff unconsciousness of the enormity he had committed.

In October 1937 Von Fritsch went on a holiday to Egypt. On his return toward the end of December the same year he was given to understand that Dr. Goebbels was about to follow his example. Von Fritsch wrote him a letter in which he advised him not to overcrowd Egypt with "convalescents," and that as the Army always had priority in everything, even holidays, the doctor had better stay at home.

This was one of the last political "jokes" that were permitted Von Fritsch. While he was seeking recreation on the banks of the Nile a trap had been set for him. It was the work of Himmler and Heydrich, who had the assistance of Franz von Papen, a former bosom friend of Von Fritsch, and General Wilhelm Keitel, subordinate general officer under Von Fritsch's command inside the Reichswehr Ministry. Keitel was known as the archplotter in the Reichswehr, who had earned among other nicknames that of "chambermaid of the Reich's Chancellery" because of his frequent, almost daily, visits to Hitler.

This was the incident of Von Blomberg's marriage, of which no clear account went out of Germany at the time. It may excuse here a short digression. In a healthy social community it would have remained what it was, a small personal affair, affecting the lives of none but the principals and their families. In Germany it uncovered the deep division between the old order and the new, and the fanatical attachment of both to

forms that were held to embody their aims. Hitler, during the period of his delusive complaints to the world, described Germany as an oppressed nation. In a sense he did not intend, when he addressed the democracies (though he was very conscious of it), there was indeed an oppressed mass of Germans who had long been frightened into silent submission to a Herrenvolk of their own. This was the army caste, which had long claimed privilege and priority in every sphere. It may be that Hitler's following had an unvoiced incentive in their feeling that at last they were being led not only against external enemies but against their own overlords. For Germany was itself a slave society, then as now, though its masters of the old order may have been less crude in their methods than its masters of the new order are now, for in the Germany of their day there was still a legal administration not at the dictation of the government; German intellectual application, unrestricted, commanded respect throughout the world, and the Civil Service, free from corruption, ranked high.

Nothing of this inarticulate revolt now came to the surface, but it is implicit in the Army's assertion of the exclusiveness of its order. It helps to explain the ease with which military leaders of intense, if restricted, *Kultur* passed with a confused sense of values from trivial to tragic issues. As an explanation of the "revolution" it is a factor at least as substantial as the regimentation of the "mild German" under the mailed fist of the moment, or as the exactions of Versailles.

Field Marshal Werner von Blomberg intended to marry a lady of no family who had hitherto been employed in the egg-distribution department of the Ministry of Agriculture. Hitler and Goering congratulated the field marshal on his decision. They told him that the proposed union would give substantial proof that the Minister of War of the Third Reich had completely grasped the true sense of the real "socialism" that was incorporated in the Nazi community. With this blessing Von Blomberg, bemused as only a man in love can be, for he was of the army caste and knew its traditions, married Fräulein Erica

Grünn. His commander in chief and other generals of the Army were profoundly shocked, as Von Blomberg should have expected them to be. Their world was rocking, and something had to be done. Von Fritsch at once called a conference of the leading officers of the Army. This conference, at which seventeen generals were present, met on January 28, 1938. It was nothing less than a "palace rebellion" against Von Blomberg, in the first place, and beyond that against Hitler. Though the conference led off with the question of what to do about the marrying War Minister, Von Fritsch soon widened the issue. He explained to the seventeen that, as they knew, he had received complaints from the army chaplains that the freedom of religious worship was severely curtailed by the indirect influence of the Gestapo upon the soldiers. In fact, some of the soldiers had taken shorthand notes of sermons given by some of the divisional pastors, and the chaplains were uneasy about the consequences. Then, leaving the spiritual issues, which were of no light concern, as we have seen, to the true Von Fritsch, the commander in chief declared that Hitler had the intention of taking both Austria and Czechoslovakia during that year, if necessary by force of arms. As commander in chief, Von Fritsch said he deemed it premature to start a major conflict in Europe at that time, especially as two branches of the German armed forces were behind their schedule, one of these being the heavy artillery, the other the preparations for field fortifications in the east and west. Another point was that the Luftwaffe was making further demands for closer participation in the larger strategical plans that were properly under the control of the General Staff of the Army and the commander in chief. Erhard Milch, Secretary of State for Air, backed by Goering, was bent upon building up in a minimum of time an overwhelming air force, and on that ground demanded that he ought to be heard to a greater extent when, for example, plans were discussed for the probable invasion of countries, such as Norway, not in immediate contact with the boundaries of the German Reich.

Von Fritsch reminded his audience that plans for the invasion

of Norway had been carefully considered as far back as 1925 by the competent German general, Von Seeckt, and the then commander in chief of the Republican Navy, Admiral Zenker; and that though a large part of future operations in that direction would fall upon the Luftwaffe, he saw no reason to permit a stronger voice to this "air-force upstart." He pointed to the danger of creating an embarrassing precedent if the generals once made concessions in this direction. A further point raised was the demand that the "Franco gamble" be brought to an end. To continue the entanglement in Spain, it was argued, would give the upper hand to such people as the retired General Ritter von Epp, Reich Commissar in Bavaria, and various other, more civilian, "strategists" who were already dreaming of the reconquest of colonies and other nonsense. Von Fritsch told this assembly that as early as 1932 Hitler had forwarded to the President of the Republic, Hindenburg, plans evolved by Von Epp that were to replace the circumspect and carefully devised plans of the Reichswehr Ministry. This clique, Von Fritsch disclosed, was now using the Spanish affair as a lever for further plans, and another retired general, Faupel, was their tool for stirring up trouble in this direction.

To show the determination of the generals, Von Fritsch had the day before taken the liberty of sending a telegram of congratulation to the ex-Kaiser at Castle Doorn on the occasion of his birthday. He now revealed that this telegram had made Hitler furious. With such arguments Von Fritsch tried to persuade the assembly that they had not been rallied merely to hold counsel over the issue of the War Minister's wedding, but on the general line of policy for the future. He demanded a vote of confidence from them, assuring them that all they had to do was to stand by him for the next few days while he, as he expressed it in typical Prussian military jargon, would in the meantime "manage the shop."

Next morning, on January 29, a company of the crack garrison regiment of Berlin (the Wachregiment) marched as usual from their barracks in the Rathenower Strasse in the north of

Berlin to the center of the city, crossing the Tiergarten, Berlin's Hyde Park, and entering through the Brandenburg Gate. This company, complete with brass band and mounted officer, was accustomed to relieve the guard of honor in front of the monument for the fallen soldiers of the last war. For this purpose they usually marched down Unter den Linden and changed the guard opposite the Prussian State Opera building. Then, after goose-stepping for a short time in front of the monument, they recrossed the Brandenburg Gate to reinforce the guards of the War Ministry in the Bendlerstrasse. Usually only the first squad, which actually relieved the guard of honor in front of the monument, carried live ammunition. On this occasion the company, after passing the Brandenburg Gate, did not march straight down to the monument, but left the broad avenue of the Unter den Linden and turned to the right into the Wilhelmstrasse, passing the British Embassy.

On the corner of the Propaganda Ministry, facing the Wilhelmplatz and the Reich Chancellery, they came to a halt. Bayonets were fixed, and then one of those incidents occurred which in themselves are small but in their significance mark the course of history. While fixing his bayonet a private who did not belong to the squad that was required to relieve the guards near the monument ripped open the cover of the leather pouches on his belt. Several clips of live ammunition fell out. The lieutenant commanding the platoon immediately picked them up, but they had not escaped the attention of several plain-clothes Gestapo men, who had already been alarmed by the unusual direction which this company had taken that morning.

Just about that time Hitler was expected to arrive by car from the Tempelhof airdrome, and would have to pass this company to enter the Reich Chancellery. The plain-clothes Gestapo men took a taxi, raced down the Wilhelmstrasse, and near the Hallesche Tor caught the large open Mercedes that carried Hitler. They reported what they had seen, and Hitler instantly gave orders to return to Tempelhof airdrome. There a few minutes later a battalion of Goering's own Luftwaffe bodyguard occu-

pied the restaurant building, thus safeguarding Hitler himself from any possible surprises. Meantime a General Staff officer arrived by sidecar and ordered the company to take up their usual duties in front of the monument and then to return to the War Ministry.

It has never been disclosed whether Von Fritsch ordered these strange movements of that company and whether an attempt on Hitler's life was planned, but it is certain that Hitler himself was convinced that the commander in chief was about to assassinate him. However, when Hitler called for Von Fritsch in the afternoon he gave the commander in chief no indication of his real feelings. He discussed with Von Fritsch the Blomberg marriage; Von Fritsch on his side pressed for a further reply to questions arising from the larger issues which he had discussed the day before with his friends. Hitler consented to ask Von Blomberg to retire, but he refused to agree to any of the more important suggestions. Von Fritsch took the first concession about Von Blomberg's marriage as a sign of weakness on Hitler's part, and subsequently treated the head of the state in the most off-hand manner of which a Prussian officer is capable. This conversation was witnessed by Colonel Warlimont, who had ideas of his own and subsequently became one of Hitler's military advisers. By that time Hitler had made up his mind to abolish the office of Minister of War and to appoint a commander in chief who would be directly responsible to himself. Knowing the ability of Von Fritsch, Hitler had thought of putting him in the office, but it was now clear that Von Fritsch would demand too much if he accepted such an offer. Von Fritsch left Hitler in the best of spirits and reported to his friends that as Hitler had given in regarding Von Blomberg's wedding he would soon make concessions on the more substantial matters. In Von Fritsch's mind, it might be thought, substance and shadow were equally important.

But there was a man in Von Fritsch's own office who had waited for this opportunity; this was General Wilhelm Keitel. This archplotter and intriguer had been kept fully informed—

not officially, by Hitler, but unofficially and more efficiently by many of his friends, among them the personal A.D.C. to Hitler, 1st class SA Group Leader Brückner. Von Fritsch did not trust Keitel, but completely underestimated his "diplomatic capacities." As far as military matters went he used to refer to him constantly as "that jackass," a remark that had even impressed Hitler, who was not at all convinced of the strategical genius which Keitel claimed to possess.

On the other hand, Hitler was convinced that preparations for the rearmament and expansion of the German Army and its training had gone so far ahead that he could now dispense with the services of Von Fritsch if he could find someone better than Keitel as a substitute. That was not an easy task. He had been kept fully informed about the conference of the generals, and the seemingly uniform mind that governed them in conference. He enlisted the services of the then German Ambassador in Vienna, Franz von Papen, to probe the solidity of this front formed by the generals. Von Papen, without inquiring directly, had sufficient scouts in the camp of the higher general clique to discover that a breach could be made in that front. When Von Fritsch returned to his friends and reported to them upon his conversation with Hitler he found, to his great surprise, that some of his colleagues seemed to have changed their minds overnight; above all, General von Reichenau, General von Kleist, General List, and General von Bock. Generals Von Rundstedt, Von Leeb, and Kress von Kressenstein, however, adhered to his side and were willing to go with him through thick and thin. The position of General von Brauchitsch, general officer commanding the East Prussian district, was undefined.

The Intelligence Service of the Reichswehr reported that Himmler had ordered Heydrich to be ready to act at any moment. Von Fritsch was disturbed, for he did not underestimate the powers of the Gestapo. Seeking to create a comparatively safe atmosphere around himself, he invited foreign diplomats accredited to the Berlin Government to dinner for the evening of February first. When these gentlemen arrived at Von

Fritsch's flat they were told that the commander in chief of the Reichswehr regretted very much that he was unable, because of ill-health, to attend the dinner party. This was diplomatic. As a matter of fact, during the afternoon of that day a small squad of hand-picked Gestapo men, under the personal leadership of Reinhard Heydrich, had arrested the commander in chief and taken him to a small villa outside Berlin on the road between Potsdam and Berlin. This villa had been secretly hired sometime before by Heydrich for the purpose of "questioning the commander in chief," and everything had been set for the great day. In this villa Himmler awaited Heydrich and his quarry. Hitler had been informed, and he also was expected at the villa. However, Von Fritsch had not been for four years commander in chief under the Hitler regime without understanding Nazi methods. He had seen too many political personalities disappear and had watched the Gestapo octopus spread its tentacles throughout the whole life of the nation. Knowing that he was no safer than anyone else who had caused the Führer fear or uneasiness, he had long before arranged with General von Rundstedt, commander in chief of the First Army Group, that if he should disappear without known reason, Von Rundstedt would at once inform the Intelligence Department of the Reichswehr, which in such an event had a standing order to dispatch two plainclothes officers in search. Accordingly two such officers reported that afternoon that the commander in chief had left his flat in company with Gestapo officers and had been accompanied by them to that villa near Potsdam. So it was that only an hour after Von Fritsch had been brought to the villa, and while Himmler was still waiting for Hitler, officers of the Potsdam garrison surrounded the villa, forced their way in at the point of their pistols, arrested the Gestapo guards, and put Himmler and Heydrich against the wall with their arms behind their heads. That was treatment these two men had for a long time frequently imposed on others but had probably never before received themselves. Von Rundstedt reported to Von Fritsch, and while the two were discussing the best way of disposing of

their two main prisoners Hitler arrived, followed by Goering. Now there was a scene of double-crossing and bargaining and trading of lives and position that would have thrilled any underworld of gangsters. Finally Von Rundstedt went home, Himmler and Heydrich were allowed to drop their arms, the SS guards were released, and the officers of the Potsdam garrison returned to barracks. And for all the outside world knew, nothing had happened.

On returning to Berlin, Von Fritsch conferred with Von Rundstedt and Von Leeb, and the three were compelled to the conclusion that as a number of the generals who had attended the conferences of the past few days had evidently betrayed them there was no sense in their remaining as serving officers of the German Army. In due course ten other generals were consulted, and all, including the old Kress von Kressenstein, agreed to ask to be relieved of their duties immediately. Von Kressenstein said later of his letter of resignation: "I am glad to say that this piece of correspondence of mine to our supreme commander, Adolf Hitler, even lacked the otherwise taken-for-granted politeness and showed this out-of-date lance corporal where he gets off."

The readiness with which Hitler had come to an agreement with Von Fritsch and Von Rundstedt on the night of February first in the villa near Potsdam was largely dictated by the attitude of the commander in chief designate, General Walter von Brauchitsch; for the same morning Von Brauchitsch had had a private conference with Hitler in which he accepted the position of commander in chief on condition that the position of Minister of War should be abolished and Keitel should receive an appointment making him at once a sort of permanent under-secretary of state for war and chief personal military adviser to Hitler. A just estimate of the military qualifications of Keitel left Von Brauchitsch little concerned about the personal advice the supreme commander would get. The acceptance by Von Brauchitsch of the highest position in the Army without previously informing the man who at the time held that position, and

after he had himself joined in the conference of generals called by Von Fritsch, shows us better how to appraise the Prussian military conception of honor; "stern, upright, and honorable Prussian generals who know nothing but their duty," as Colonel General von Seeckt described them in his address to officers of the First Army District, Berlin, in 1924. Inside the German Army and throughout Germany it is an accepted maxim that the officers of the armed forces will claim precedence in everything on the ground that they are the leaders of the instrument that makes it possible for the community of the German Reich to live at all. In the face of foreign countries, every German is ready to excuse any action that any of his officers may see fit to take. The dogma of "reason of state," perhaps never distinguishable from the passion for personal domination, has been woven into the mind of every German leader of any political denomination. Even to the general public it was sacrilege up to 1933 to believe that this ideal was used by the leaders of the armed forces to achieve their personal ambitions. Yet among these leaders it would be difficult to name one who could be shown to be inspired by anything above a narrow conception of personal or German domination.

To an outside world this "palace rebellion" was hushed up by letters sent to Von Blomberg and Von Fritsch by Hitler, and as usual culminated in a supreme effort of hypocrisy. Hitler wrote to Von Fritsch a few days later:

You have often found yourself compelled, because of your undermined health, to ask me to release you from your office. As a sojourn in the south [he obviously refers to the Egyptian journey which Von Fritsch had taken the previous year, and which had nothing to do with this crisis], which you made a short while ago, has not had the desired effect, I have now decided to comply with your request. . . . With the restoration and strengthening of the German Army between March 1935 and February 1938 your name will be linked in history.

That letter was written to mislead foreign nations, who had to be given the impression that the unity of the German com-

mand was intact. On the other hand, both Goebbels and Himmler, allegedly acting under the immediate orders of Hitler, started whispering campaigns with the object of incriminating the dismissed commander in chief. Goebbels chose a line that was not without precedent. Hitler, explaining the shooting of his best friend, Roehm, in 1934, gave among other reasons the fact that Roehm had seen the French Ambassador, M. François-Poncet, and discussed foreign politics with him, a meeting that was regarded by Hitler, so he said, as high treason. Now Goebbels circulated the rumor that Von Fritsch had had secret and treasonable relations with M. Daladier, the French War Minister. Himmler made a quite different accusation, but one equally designed to mark Von Fritsch as being opposed to Hitler's regime. He ordered his Gestapo men to whisper into the ears of the German people, among whom they found ready audiences, that Von Fritsch had attempted a monarchist plot in which the second son of the crown prince was named. Both Goebbels and Himmler issued after some time a formal denial to such rumors, to which, of course, they thus gave fresh currency, as they intended to do.

But the Nazis were not content to see Von Fritsch out of office, and Reinhard Heydrich, especially, now drew upon accusations his hate had secretly accumulated. The chief security officer of the Gestapo had boasted of having in his hands evidence that would hang Von Fritsch at any time. Knowing of this, Von Fritsch, while under detention in the villa near Potsdam, had demanded a court of honor in which he could meet all accusations against him. He now repeated his demand and, for his immediate safety, installed himself in the army camp near Hanover while the court of honor was being constituted. There he received a communication stating that the court would be held in the presence of Hitler, Von Brauchitsch, and several other generals, with Goering as president. Von Fritsch was to leave for Berlin by train.

One morning toward the end of March 1938 Von Fritsch boarded a train at the station of Hanover. From inside his com-

partment he saw that the platform outside his carriage was surrounded by plain-clothes Gestapo men. He at once left the compartment from the other side, passed through another train that had pulled up alongside, made his way to another platform, and took a car back to the army camp.

On arriving in the army camp his batman handed him a telegram which had been sent to his quarters. It stated that Von Fritsch had met with a fatal accident on his journey to Berlin and that his body would be delivered to the army authorities in Berlin the next day. Three days later Von Fritsch faced the court of honor with this telegram in his pocket. The scene rivaled that in the villa, though no guns were drawn. Both Goering and Hitler kept quiet. Himmler and Heydrich, having had reports that their scheme to have the former commander in chief removed by a "fatal accident" had failed, were not there.

Von Fritsch, in the account of the strange proceedings he gave to his former A.D.C., said that for two hours, "I let them have broadside after broadside, and it takes a man like fat-skinned Goering not to be blown to bits by it." Von Fritsch returned to Hanover, where a small hamlet had been provided for him by a number of officer friends.

Months went by. The international situation came to boiling point week after week. Though Hitler was convinced that in Von Brauchitsch he had a good substitute for Von Fritsch, he was not at all convinced of the military qualifications of Keitel. He was conscious that in the dismissed commander in chief he had lost a source of military strength, especially as the charges trumped up by Himmler and Heydrich had been shown to be baseless. He tried again to approach Von Fritsch, and again the services of the agile busybody, Franz von Papen, were enlisted. The first opportunity came when Von Fritsch, "in recognition of his services"—a compliment that raised much satirical comment in higher government and army circles in Berlin—was made colonel in chief of the Artillery Regiment No. 12 at the maneuver field of Gross-Born in Pomerania. In the presence of Von Rundstedt, Blaskowitz, the local commander in chief, and

other high officers, Von Brauchitsch feted Von Fritsch. Nor did Von Brauchitsch end his compliments with the usual "Heil Hitler!" but, as a special tribute to his former superior, called for a triple "Hurrah," and ordered the band of the 12th Artillery to play the march past of the regiment, not, as was customary, two national anthems which would have imposed on Von Fritsch's ears the Horst Wessel song, to whose author he had repeatedly referred as "that libertine." On this occasion it was left to Von Fritsch to propose the *Sieg Heil* for the Fatherland and, in a much lower voice, a Heil to the Führer. Hitler was not present, for the sufficient reason that all his attempts to conciliate Von Fritsch had failed. Von Fritsch insisted upon three demands before he would enter into negotiations with Hitler again.

1. The instantaneous dismissal and the subsequent trial of Himmler.

2. The immediate execution, without trial, of Heydrich.

3. The dismissal, without prosecution, of Goebbels, and, to quote Von Fritsch, "that inflated elephant baby" Goering.

Von Fritsch had refused to be present at the ceremony at Gross-Born if Hitler were present, as he did not want to be taken by surprise with any announcements Hitler might make regarding his reinstatement. At the same time Hitler feared the worst as regards Von Fritsch's visit to Pomerania, being certain that the displaced commander in chief would take the opportunity to talk things over with his former friends in that province, which is the playground of all arch-Junkers.

Von Fritsch deliberately prolonged his stay, and it was only eight days later that Hitler, "sacrificing his holidays," also went to Gross-Born, and to show how much superior he was in rank to the sacked Von Fritsch he was not content with reviewing a single artillery regiment but ordered the presence of the entire Second Army Corps. Up to the outbreak of the war in September 1939, Hitler never lost hope of regaining the services of Von Fritsch, and the untiring Franz von Papen besieged Von Fritsch with his proposals. Hitler, who understood what he

needed from professionals and experts, well knew that none of the active service generals was Von Fritsch's equal in ability. Fully aware, as supreme commander, of the origin and foundation of the plans of operation that were to be put into execution as soon as the first shot was fired, he had no intention of leaving it to men like Keitel, and doubted also whether the great gifts of Von Brauchitsch were adequate. He was willing to accept Von Fritsch, even at the risk of having in high office the general who was least attached to himself and the Nazi party.

But Von Fritsch stubbornly maintained his demands, and he was never reinstated. It was reported that at times Hitler played with the idea of dismissing Himmler and Heydrich, but that he was given to understand by those two powerful men that any such order might leave him in danger. Thus it was that at the outbreak of this war Von Fritsch, out of favor and no longer in the running for a leading place in the Army, joined the regiment of which he had been made colonel in chief. On September 22 an announcement by the High Command of the German Armed Forces stated that the former commander in chief, Colonel General Baron Werner von Fritsch, had been killed in action. This report and a very brief obituary did not for long conceal the truth. Von Fritsch had been assassinated. It was reported that only the day before his alleged death in battle Von Fritsch had been seen at Grodzisk, a small town twenty-two miles from Warsaw. This report came from German prisoners who had been captured the next day by a squadron of Polish Lancers in front of Warsaw. It was therefore impossible for Von Fritsch to have been leading an armed reconnaissance party of his artillery regiment, which would in any case have been a strange duty to be undertaken by so senior an officer. With the end of the Polish campaign details about the assassination filtered through.

On the morning of September 22 Von Fritsch was standing with the battery commander of No. 2 battery of his regiment in a comparatively quiet position, some miles to the west of Warsaw. He was looking through field glasses and had asked

his A.D.C. to get him a greatcoat. No. 2 battery commander had also left his post and joined the A.D.C. Von Fritsch was looking toward Warsaw. In his rear four SS men in the uniform of the German Army were busying themselves. Suddenly one of them fired at Von Fritsch's back, but the A.D.C. at that moment came out of a slit trench, received the bullet, and dropped dead. Von Fritsch turned on his heels and drew his pistol.

Instantly there was a scene that would be more appropriate to an outbreak by Chicago gangsterdom than to a modern army. Two SS men were killed outright, a third one was wounded in the head, and the fourth managed to shoot Von Fritsch in the head and heart. The man who killed Von Fritsch was himself shot dead by his victim, who fired from the ground. That is how Von Fritsch "fell for Führer and Fatherland." Immediately after his death the SS formations were handed a story that was intended to be a justification for the murder. Von Fritsch, ran this account, criticized the ruthless use of Panzer battalions, which were running down women and children with their tanks in their advance toward Warsaw. It was sought to brand Von Fritsch as a weakling who would be liable at any time to hinder the advance of the German Army. It is significant that at that time the story was given only to SS formations who had supplied the murderers. The state funeral which had been granted by Hitler to the former commander in chief was the occasion at which Von Brauchitsch uttered an oration that came near to being a condemnation of Hitler and his gang.

It has been suggested that in a last flickering of personal friendship Von Brauchitsch cared little what happened to him, having set his mind only on defending the honor of his dead brother officer. Unhappily, no such high motive can be conceded to the then commander in chief of the German Army. Von Brauchitsch was merely safeguarding himself against an intended double-crossing by Hitler, Goering, Goebbels, Hess, and Ribbentrop, who had set their minds on reaping the moral harvest of the Polish victory, while Von Brauchitsch, looking

forward to conducting the French campaign the next year, was not inclined to brook any interference from these civilians. He also wanted to be in a strong position to deal with the armed SS formations, which had appeared inside Germany in increasing strength, and he intended to press his demands for these formations to take part in the battles that were to come.

The one man who rebuked Hitler in forthright terms was Field Marshal von Mackensen, the old retired officer who had held high command in World War I and who was known alike for his mediocre capacity and his uncouth manners. Von Mackensen, who owed his reputation and his place during World War I to Hans von Seeckt, his chief of staff, had been greatly impressed by Von Seeckt's reports of Von Fritsch. By sheer accident he had come into possession of the real facts relating to Von Fritsch's "heroic death," and he was the more shocked because he had lived in a world in which the shooting of a general of the German Army by members of the secret police could not be conceived. When he celebrated his ninetieth birthday he accused Hitler, in front of a large party, of being responsible for the death of Von Fritsch.

The dead colonel general had left circumstantial evidence of his murderers' motives. Before he volunteered for the artillery regiment in which he met his death in front of Warsaw, he had written what he called his political testament and had had several photo copies made. When he was killed these copies circulated among the higher officers of the German Army and naturally made a deep impression. In this testament Von Fritsch was said to have explained his ideas of the limited power that should be given to Hitler and the overriding power that should be retained by the generals during this war, so that whatever the outcome they could dismiss Hitler at will.

There are today in the German Army military leaders of high capacity, as this book will show in detail. None of them could claim to rank with Von Fritsch. Examination of his original Poland plan, drawn up before the expansion of the German Army, makes it clear that even with the relatively small army

of the day it would have been possible to wreck the Polish State in a short time. The unprecedented increase of the armed forces of the nation, and, which is more important, the maintenance of the high standard of efficiency that had been set by the smaller army, goes to the credit of this man. He was probably the military equal of Moltke, Sr., and of Schlieffen. Von Fritsch's assassination freed Hitler from his strongest political adversary, but it deprived the German Army of a leader who might have prevented decisions that have brought the German Reich from a prospect of near-victory to certain defeat. For Germans, and for many outside Germany, Baron Werner von Fritsch represented, together with others of his clique, the type of Prussian officer who, with all his limitations in a civilized world, still has a marked distinction which the Nazis do not approach, either in ideal or in practice. With the Nazis the Prussian officer joined hands, and to the Nazis the better part of his character succumbed. Though by early training a religious man, Von Fritsch did not allow any religious principle to stand in the way of that deadly state necessity which it was his military ideal to serve. Nothing was so sacred to this man as his profession and the nationalism that inspired it. He was an exceptionally gifted member of a class which used the German people as an instrument of war, as Hitler has done, and the fact that Hitler succeeded better than they by developing their own methods further is their very condemnation. In the means and the formal arrangement Von Fritsch might differ from Hitler and the Nazi party, but the final aim was the same. Von Fritsch and his kind were not above Hitler in their disregard of human lives, whether the lives of their own nation or others, and they were on the same level in their contempt for the things of the spirit.

II

Field Marshal Karl Rudolf Gerd von Rundstedt

*Prussia is not a state that possesses an army; it is an army
that has conquered a nation. Mirabeau.*

Field Marshal von Rundstedt's bearing lacks nothing that belongs to a great man except the simplicity which moral greatness in all ages and countries takes from its sense of oneness with the rest of humanity. This quality does not go with Prussian traditions of pride and self-assertion. Tall and spare, he moves across the parade ground with the evenness of a man of wiry endurance, a vehicle of thought. His thin, intellectual face could belong to the Church if it had not also the outward alertness of the soldier used to command. If he has feeling he disdains it and gives it no outlet. At a military steeplechase, where several riders came to grief, one has seen him ignore the dead, even one of royal name, to see the shaken and injured riders carried to safety. He will not allow himself even a gesture of sentiment that has no practical value. His mental stature is restricted by his thought for the prestige and interest of the Army. His own son was dead for him when he learned that the young man had chosen philosophy as his life interest and had refused to become an officer. A saying attributed to him, that a man who had retired after a lifetime was now guilty of being a civilian, with extenuating circumstances might be natural to any Prussian regular officer. In the mouth of a man of Rundstedt's eminence, it is

more significant of the warping mental effect of the Prussian ideal. Falling short in humanity, his mind narrowed to the Army; within that sphere the dignity of his presence is undeniable. The geniality that outside Prussian Germany grows out of broader sympathies is not to be seen in his keen, melancholy dark eyes. In service his force and swiftness in decision are the greater for his human limitations. After bending for hours over a large-scale map, his orders rap out in precise language and clipped intonation, scattering his aides in all directions. With these directions frequent rudeness will be incidental, and its effect indifferent to him. He has the courage of his hardness and will alienate important personages as readily as small men. He will criticize Hitler if, as "civilian," the formally "beloved Führer" should interfere with his professional plans, but he does not mind encouraging the worship of Hitler if that attitude can be made to bring additional strength to his army group. His lack of diplomacy and warmth might leave him helpless in a political issue and inept as a civilian administrator, for he disdains the balancing of relative justice toward human beings in varied conditions, and of the needs of civilian life he is content to remain ignorant. It is on the battlefield that he has to be reckoned with. There, though his mind works normally within the prepared plan of operations in the rigid way prescribed for the German officer, he has the gift, rare among his colleagues, of rapid disengagement, and improvisation. By him, more than by any of the German generals, the resources of those called upon to oppose him are likely to be extended.

The ablest military leader in Hitler's service today, accomplished in theory and proved in action, is Field Marshal Karl Rudolf Gerd von Rundstedt, and to him has fallen the leading part in operational plans for the present war laid down by Von Seeckt, the first commander in chief of the Reichswehr, and completed by his strongest successor, Werner von Fritsch. The oldest German field marshal in active service, Von Rundstedt,



From Black Star

FIELD MARSHAL KARL RUDOLF GERD VON RUNDSTEDT, who has the finest military mind in Germany today and is now in charge of western defense.



who was born on December 12, 1875, has even more service experience behind him than had Von Fritsch. In peacetime he was probably Von Fritsch's nearest rival as a strategist, and since Von Fritsch's death his word has become law in the German Army, where he has been nicknamed "the high priest of strategy."

He was destined for the Army while still in the cradle. His family was well known in the so-called Oldmark of Brandenburg and boasted of having had several ancestors who, as independent war lords centuries before, fought the lieutenants of the German emperor (then seated in Vienna), the counts of Hohenzollern, who had been charged with the administration of these border districts.

After a brief time at the local grammar school he entered the cadet schools of Oranienstein and Grosslichterfelde and at the age of seventeen joined, as an ensign, the Infantry Regiment No. 83 at Kassel. As a first lieutenant he passed to the Infantry Regiment No. 171, also known as the 2nd Upper Alsatian Infantry Regiment. This transfer was not made on military grounds alone. Lieutenant von Rundstedt was posted here to strengthen the Prussian element in Alsace and to counter the resistance of the conquered French population, which showed no sign of declining. Characteristically Prussian in his ruthlessness and narrowness of political outlook, Von Rundstedt was expected to set before Alsatian leading families an example of Prussian austerity and sternness worthy of their emulation. Though in this he failed, the Prussian ideal, even at its best, being repugnant to the Alsatian temperament, he was highly regarded throughout the entire military district of Alsace-Lorraine as an exceptionally gifted young officer. Captain von Rundstedt, as he was then, let it be known that the garrison commander of Colmar consulted him at every opportunity in the preparation of mobilization plans supplementary to the general directions issued by the Berlin General Staff. Taken on to the staff of the garrison as aide-de-camp, he took lightly the duties of that post but became what he liked to call "the pocket edition of a chief of staff."

His transfer to the General Staff in Berlin became a matter of course.

During the last war he had the important position of chief of staff of the Fifteenth Army Corps and served in this capacity on the eastern and western fronts for a short period. Transferred to the Turkish General Staff, he did much to help in its urgent work of reorganization.

In these influential positions Von Rundstedt never forgot that his father had been a major general of the arch-Junker class of Brandenburg-Prussia, and he insisted upon the paternal eminence the more when less gifted colleagues, whose blood may have done more for them than their brains, jealously raked up the fact that his mother was a simple bourgeoisie with the maiden name of Adelheid Fischer. Von Rundstedt himself had married in 1902 and had been careful in the selection of his wife's family. Though his father-in-law was only a major, he flourished the name of Von Goetz, while his mother-in-law was a baroness with the maiden name of Von Schlotheim, a name so typically aristocratic that it served for the romantic heroes in cheap six-penny editions of love stories written for parlormaid. It was part of Von Rundstedt's quality that he coveted actual power of command more than rapid promotion in rank, and he remained throughout the last war a major. The Reichswehr could not dispense with such a man, and he was gazetted a lieutenant colonel in October 1920. During the following years, until 1923, he privately studied the strategical causes of the downfall of the Imperial Army and wrote special memoranda on this subject to the powers in Berlin. His conclusions went far beyond the ordinary way of thought of a General Staff officer in the examination of such questions. He examined the economic position of every government that had declared war on Germany and came to the conclusion that the real cause of Imperial Germany's military downfall was the economic power of Great Britain. During later years he tried often to bring influential political and military personalities to this same conviction.

As a colonel Von Rundstedt became chief of staff of the Third

Cavalry Division which, under the command of Lieutenant General Paul Hasse, was responsible for the military occupation of Thuringia in 1923. With the excuse of quelling a Communist uprising in that district, he went methodically to work to eliminate the danger to men of his own class, both in the Army and in heavy industry, that might result from a left-wing or even Communist government in Thuringia. His ruthlessness in this aim surprised even the friends who knew his thoroughgoing Prussianism. Here in central Germany the workers were determined to call a halt to the development of reactionary elements whose traditional purpose was to thwart and nullify the new constitution of Weimar. The fight of the left-wing formations then had the sympathy of the larger part of the Thuringians, and the workers' battalions were well established for a conflict with their former masters and lords who, like the Bourbons, had learned nothing and forgotten nothing. Von Rundstedt answered their assertion of their rights with machine guns and with a lightning redistribution of his troops that smothered resistance at the start.

With the military power of the left-wing groups annihilated, Von Rundstedt maintained military occupation and tried his hand for the first time in internal politics by staging a so-called general election for Thuringia under the bayonets and guns of his division. The result was that within a few months Thuringia was reckoned one of the most nationalistic and reactionary communities inside Germany. This election was the origin of the group of Reichstag deputies who formed a center of obstruction to any further socialistic developments and saw to it that the activities of the Army were sufficiently camouflaged, and the deputies themselves never forgot to whom they owed their position. Von Rundstedt, together with General Hasse, had sworn an oath of allegiance to the Constitution of the German Republic and, by the authority of the government, thus formally acknowledged he had been charged with maintaining peace and order in Thuringia. His conception of this task was such that he protected and even instigated movements against the Consti-

tution, to which he was pledged, defending his actions always with the formula that, whatever action the Thuringian representatives might take against the Reich Government and against the Constitution, he had only done his military duty. The hypocrisy and essential disloyalty of a typical representative of the Prussian Army caste has probably never been better illustrated than by this double-faced conduct of Von Rundstedt's. It was a standard that was taken as a directive by many other officers, who felt that if a man of Von Rundstedt's military reputation could adopt such a line in political matters, they would be perfectly correct in following his example. The alternative, indeed, would have been more difficult for them, the influence of the Army in their lives being far more powerful than that of the civil government. Thus, to the military credit he had earned, Von Rundstedt now added the reputation of being a "stout nationalist." Under the existing regime this meant a long course of pretense and hypocrisy for 99 per cent of the Reichswehr's officers, and for the more responsible men concerned with rearmament against the country's treaty undertakings it meant occasional hard lying, as we have seen in the example of the bluff Von Fritsch.

The year 1924 saw Von Rundstedt in the position of chief of staff to Army District II (Stettin) for one year. This appointment was given to him as a rest after his political success in Thuringia, for in Pomerania political questions did not hamper purely military affairs. But the matador of the nationalistic cause in the ring of Red Thuringia could not decline upon the glamour of past success, and a willing audience of retired Imperial generals, of big landowners and young ensigns and lieutenants, responded with flattering applause to the larger views of their new chief of staff. Von Rundstedt continued to dabble in politics, this time on a larger scale. Pomerania had the reputation of being the most militaristic province in Prussia. It had in peacetime supplied the Imperial German Army with a number of first-class cavalry and infantry regiments, notably grenadiers. Now, with the limitation of armaments, the Reichswehr

garrisons in Pomerania were few and scattered. By a subtle and effective propaganda campaign Von Rundstedt here won new support for his political and military objective. He urged upon assemblies of teachers and professors that if the youth of Pomerania were trained, officially or unofficially, in military bodies, they would escape the "breath of socialist devilry" and would not be infected by the poison spread by people he called apostles of Marx and helpmates of a hell compared with which Dante's *Inferno* would be child's play. In such horrific figures of speech the impassioned Prussian meant to picture his own government in Berlin and the Constitution of the German Republic, which prescribed to him, as chief of staff of an army district, the duty of seeing that officers and men under his command and that of his commanding general should observe faithfully the obligations they had undertaken when entering the Army of the Republic. That year of his in Pomerania was nothing but a continuous breach of the oath that he had voluntarily undertaken five years before.

In 1925 he was transferred again and took over command of the 18th Infantry Regiment in Paderborn, a post he held until 1927. These years as the simple colonel of an infantry regiment had been forced upon him by his friends in the Reichswehr Ministry because he had been rather careless and overconfident in Stettin in 1924, and it was thought politic that one politically so committed should disappear for some years until the future of the Reich should be more clearly defined. Caring little about the regiment under his command, Von Rundstedt employed himself usefully in preparing for the events he foresaw and the ambitious part he hoped to take in guiding them. He studied the strategy of other armies, especially of the French and the Russian. At the same time he was privately supplying the camouflaged General Staff in Berlin with schemes of maneuver built up on the real operational plans that lay in the safes of the Reichswehr Ministry. It has been said of these plans that they provided up to the last word for the organization and timing of as many as five hundred units and formations in one opera-

tion, and are remarkable for the great care taken to use mechanization in transport and attack proper.

The value placed on this work by the Reichswehr explains the unusual distinction this colonel of an infantry regiment received in being suddenly picked in 1927 to become the chief of staff of the Group Command II in Kassel. The Group Command was one of the most important command posts below the office of the commander in chief in Berlin. It exercised military power over the whole of western Germany and had, to a large extent, to supervise the preparations for the use of peacetime industry in war (shadow factories). Up to the time of Von Rundstedt's appointment the generals and chiefs of staff of the Army Group Command II had found difficulty in persuading industries to accept machine tools that would easily turn out modern armaments. The political atmosphere in the Ruhr district, in southwestern and central Germany, had not been favorable for such a plan on a larger scale. Von Rundstedt changed that. As a major general he traveled up and down the area under his command and often held conferences with important industrialists, with whom he discussed subjects that gave a shudder even to his immediate superior, general of infantry, Walter Reinhardt. In fact, Reinhardt tried to put the brake on the activity of his ambitious chief of staff. Reinhardt was not averse to this illegal work, which was useful to himself and his friends for the increase of the armed strength of Germany, first against foreign powers and secondly as an instrument of nationalistic internal German policy. But Reinhardt was afraid; and, as younger Reichswehr officers cynically put it, he sometimes even had scruples in continuing his violation of the oath of allegiance he had sworn. Consequently complaints poured into the Reichswehr Ministry signed by Von Rundstedt himself, stating that it was impossible to work under a chief whose courage was not equal to his task. Thus Von Rundstedt took direction into his own hands, and it is symptomatic of the influence he had acquired that before appointing a successor to Reinhardt the Reichswehr Ministry dispatched a confidential messenger to

him to ask for his advice. He actually chose his own superior, who turned out to be Baron Kress von Kressenstein, Sr., an old reactionary who was an ideal choice for the purpose. For the baron, scruples in the means by which the military cause could be served did not exist. He was delighted with the progress his chief of staff had made.

Von Rundstedt, of course, had friends in Berlin. It would have been impossible for him to pull his strings at the War Office so effectively if it had not been for his bosom friend, Von Schleicher, the chief conspirator and intriguer in Berlin. It was Von Schleicher who saw to it that Von Rundstedt was given the command of the 2nd Cavalry Division in Breslau in January 1929, where again he threw himself into the illegal activity of preparing for the expansion of the armed forces. As chief of staff of Group Command II, he had to deal mainly with industry; now, as chief of the 2nd Cavalry Division, he was more concerned with the man power and the resources upon which the Reichswehr could draw in case of emergency. Von Rundstedt professed that in the descent on Poland he might be forced to call upon trained reserves at short notice. That was his explanation in confidential conferences with the Reich Government in Berlin, but there was a more immediate reason. The district of the 2nd Cavalry Division forms a strategical key to the Reich capital, and in the Reich capital a severe internal political struggle was going on. The nationalistic elements thought that the time would come soon when they could step out into the open for the execution of their ambitious plans and dispose of any Socialist or Democratic government in Berlin. The reactionary conservative elements, under the leader Hugenberg, who had probably the closest link with the Reichswehr, had come to the conclusion that though they might gain considerably through elections, the support they would get would never suffice to form a government of their own, and that only by a military *coup d'état* could they "rectify an otherwise impossible situation in Berlin" (Von Schleicher). Von Rundstedt himself never forgot that any increase of the Army would work for

internal domination, though he only referred openly to the defense of the country against potential enemies.

Events came nearly to a climax when in 1931 he was appointed commander of the Third Army District in succession to General Joachim von Stülpnagel, because in this office he was the virtual dictator—though only in case of emergency—of Berlin. The ambitious General von Stülpnagel, though politically hand in glove with Von Schleicher, had impetuously overstepped the mark by referring to himself as the probable chancellor designate of a future nationalistic government, an assumption that did not fit into Von Schleicher's own private plans.

The year 1932 saw Von Rundstedt as commander in chief of Group Command I and the senior officer in the Berlin and central and eastern German districts. By this time both army and nationalist leaders thought that events were ripe for action and that the capable Roman Catholic chancellor, Dr. Heinrich Brüning, could be replaced. It was through an incredible stroke of intrigue that Brüning was deprived of office by the President of the German Reich, aged Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, and Franz von Papen appointed chancellor, while a certain Herr Bracht was Reich Minister of the Interior. Bracht's caliber as a statesman and his conception of the need of the hour may be judged by the decree he now issued. He saw the key to the stability of the state in the nice degree of concealment preserved in bathing costumes and accordingly laid down forms and limits. In this he was not, of course, entirely simple. The government was acutely embarrassed and popular attention had to be distracted from its plight.

Brüning, though profoundly surprised at this lack of confidence by a President whom he had just assisted in attaining a second term of office, retired without protest. The political power in Prussia, however, was still in the hands of the Social Democratic party, and the Prime Minister of Prussia, Herr Braun, together with the Minister of the Interior, Karl Severing, had a stronghold of considerable importance in the person of the president of the Berlin Police, Grzesinski, and his able vice-

president, Dr. Weiss. Although the Prussian ministers had already made large concessions to the Reichswehr, especially when they had been anxious for the security of the Reich community, they were now unwilling to yield further. For at last they saw that the expansion of the Reichswehr and the Army's encroachment into political government were directed especially against themselves, and only as a secondary consideration against any foreign danger.

With courage that surprised our protagonists for the Army, not to speak of Von Papen, who thought that the game had been lost, both Braun and Severing barricaded themselves in their ministries and surrounded them with strong bodies of the local police, who were nearly as well armed as the Reichswehr infantry. Then on July 20, 1932, Von Rundstedt declared a state of siege, and Braun, Grzesinski, and Severing surrendered to the proverbial lieutenant and platoon and were transported to the officers' detention barracks. Possibly the only man who would have answered this flagrant breach of constitutional rights with equal firmness was Karl Severing, but his voice was not heard. Von Rundstedt addressed the population of Berlin, saying he would be "as mild as possible if my wishes are obeyed during this stage of emergency in Berlin," but that he would employ force ruthlessly to break any resistance. To the German and foreign press he explained that he could see nobody and would make no personal appearance in front of them. Privately he fell into bathos and explained, "I might be caricatured by some of the cartoonists," and that for a Prussian general would never do. He hated publicity, which he called "hot air," and never was on a good footing with the press. Though it might be argued that the persons officially most responsible for these deeds were the President of the Reich, Paul von Hindenburg, and the chancellor of the government, Franz von Papen, it is incontestable that the Reichswehr commanders involved, and above all Von Rundstedt, were the ready instruments in this bloodless revolt against the constituted state authority. Von Rundstedt professed later

that the order to arrest the legitimate government of Prussia did not cause him as much as ten minutes' loss of sleep.

Once the *coup d'état* had succeeded, Von Rundstedt advocated primarily the dismissal of the rather unpractical Franz von Papen, who, he thought, would let slip the fruits of victory, and it was mainly by the strong support of the commander of Army Group I that General Kurt von Schleicher was emboldened to assume the chancellorship of the Reich. Thus for the first time the man who had hitherto used the heads of German governments like marionettes on a string took over the responsibility himself. It was a false step. Von Schleicher was refused support by all political parties in Germany, especially by the strong Nazi party.

Now there was a prospect that the internal fight which had been waged by the Army against the Socialist and Democratic governments would change into a fight between the Army and the National Socialist party. But after a careful review of the past and an effort to reckon what might happen in the future, Von Schleicher thought it better to retire. He saw it would be impossible to carry out a large-scale program of rearmament and army expansion with a National Socialist majority in the Reichstag. This conclusion was further influenced by the weakness of the Socialist and Democratic parties, both moral and physical. Not all their leaders had been proof against the Army's appeals to their nationalism, and their government had never controlled a force that could stand up against any threat of action by the Army. Although the storm-trooper organization of the Nazi party was far from being armed, they had been drilled and were ready to receive machine guns and even artillery, which would form a stronger threat against any opposition than could be summoned by the Social-Democratic deputies. The army leaders, of course, had been quite content to see the Social Democrats choose the Reichstag as the arena in which to settle their differences and quarrels.

The first Hitler Cabinet was now formed after the President had consulted with Von Schleicher and the commanding gen-

erals of the Reichswehr, which, under the Constitution, had no authority in the matter. Von Schleicher gave his blessing to this cabinet because he was certain that the general officer commanding Army Group I, General von Rundstedt, would be at any time in a position to act again as the faithful watchdog for the Army, and nobody in the Reichswehr had any doubt that, if called upon to do so, Von Rundstedt would repeat the operation which, for his own ends and those of his friends, he had carried out in 1923 in Thuringia.

The pressing demands of the Army to dispose somehow or other of the increasing power of the storm troopers and the ambitious designs of their chief of staff were largely based upon the feeling of security they had in Von Rundstedt, who was always there with a considerable armed power at his hand as a last means of argument, and Von Rundstedt himself never pretended that he was not ready to act as expected. It was at this time that the Nazi-party cabinet ministers and higher leaders of the storm troopers sought to enter the higher social circles of Berlin, and in his capacity as group commander Von Rundstedt ought to have accepted them. He flatly refused. To an outsider this conduct on the part of an important German army leader may not be understood, for obviously the political platform had now been constructed upon which larger plans for an expansion of the Army could be put into practice. Certainly neither the government nor any section of the population would have offered criticism of rearmament. Such opposition as had been offered at any time under the new regime had been feeble, for it came only from individuals. All that the army leaders had longed for in the fifteen years since the Armistice had been achieved. But now the real character of men like Von Rundstedt came to the surface.

Whatever the generals thought of Germany, the German community, the security of the Reich, their principal concern was to put into power again the caste that had always controlled the Army, which had been not only the instrument of government but the directing power behind it, as well as the dominant

influence in the German social system. For this was a fight for noblemen. The new National Socialist Government loudly claimed, before the German nation and the world, that it would break down all barriers of class distinction inside Germany and that in time every man would be put into the position he had the capacity to fill. That was the appeal made to the people, and it not only served the Nazi purpose within Germany but deduced into sympathy many outside Germany. The worst of the most immediate of Nazi aims was to force the whole of industrial Germany into the service of a war machine that would be directed by Hitler and his handy men. Incidental to this would be a new hierarchy and its personal aggrandizement, and the long crescendo of savagery in crushing opposition.

All this seemed to suit Von Rundstedt and his friends, for they reckoned on being able to redirect power into their own hands—where, according to their traditional, ancestral scheme of things, it belonged. To them the Nazi clique were “upstarts,” and that label disposed of them without much “examination of their aims.” And while the Nazis prepared and lured the credulous who disregarded German history into believing in their peaceful intentions, the Von Rundstedts won the sympathy of their opposite numbers abroad with their claim to be simple German patriots, watching only for the danger in the East.

Henceforth Von Rundstedt, as commander in chief of Army Group I, made it plain that if Goering's state police could not deal with the Roehm followers he would at a minute's call provide the firing squads. But Nazis and Junkers were not united in their sinister purposes, for when General Kurt von Schleicher and his wife and others were murdered with a reckless disregard for legality that might well have given alarm to other high officers, Von Rundstedt was not moved to show condemnation. His own predominant position had been relieved of the immediate threat from Roehm and his staff organization in Munich and Berlin, which commanded millions of potential soldiers who might have been turned against the regular Army.

The “brown dirt,” as Von Rundstedt described it, having been

cleared up, he settled down again to the expansion of the new training for the troops under his command. In contrast to many of the leading generals, Von Rundstedt had been an infantry specialist, and, as such, was likely to be rather backward in his views, or so people thought who did not know him well. They soon learned better. While other departments in the German Reichswehr busied themselves with questions of Panzers, of artillery, of aircraft collaboration, and many hundred other of the important and vital renovations in armament, Von Rundstedt made it his job to increase the striking power of the mass of the German Army, the infantry. Reforms made effective on the ground of his urgency centered in the following considerations.

It was impossible to send infantry into battle under the conditions of the last war. The automatic arms of the heavier support given at that time to the riflemen was obviously inadequate. Never again must the charging infantry become easy prey for the increased automatic arms of other branches, of the more deadly attack from the air, from heavy artillery and the fire and speed of the tank. Therefore Von Rundstedt suggested and put into practice a complete reorganization of this branch of the Army. The infantry company received twelve machine guns, three light mortars, and an unspecified amount of anti-tank weapons. Thus the armament of the individual company was heavier than the armament of an entire regiment during the last war. The infantry regiment comprised three machine-gun companies instead of one as in the last war, six extremely heavy mortars, a communication platoon, an engineer platoon, a cavalry squadron, a close support gun battery, and a comparatively strong anti-tank company. The organization of the entire regiment was protected by anti-aircraft of light and medium caliber.

The increase in heavy armament for the infantry regiment brought up the question of transport of these arms. As the transport had to be moved at the speed of the individual rifleman, horse-drawn vehicles were used to a large extent. Only where in action quick change of position and fast transport were necessary was motorization adopted, this being almost ex-

clusively in the anti-tank company and the anti-aircraft batteries. For the rest of their heavy weapons the infantry had under its command horses exceeding in number those of a cavalry regiment during the last war, which explains the large purchases of cavalry horses in England and other countries before the outbreak of World War II.

Apart from stronger editions of the formations permanently attached to the headquarters of an infantry regiment, particular care was taken by Von Rundstedt to make the commander of an infantry division fairly independent as regards engineers. Pontoons, labor sections, motor sawyers for felling trees, flame-throwing companies, and so forth became a standard issue for this division. The anti-aircraft artillery was considerably reinforced, and throughout the entire divisional structure a certain number of machine guns was permanently allotted to anti-aircraft tasks.

This process meant that higher and lower leaders and their men must be fully acquainted with their material and know how to put it to the best tactical advantage in the field. This required that the N.C.O.s especially had to be given more individual training than before, and here Von Rundstedt was up against it. The soldiers he commanded, especially the riflemen, had been through a school centuries old which relied upon strict obedience and discipline rather than individual thinking by the individual soldier. The reputation of the Prussian grenadier was founded on the fact that he would execute orders under heaviest fire without moving an eyelid. The disregard for human life on the part of the command and willingness to die as the duty of the soldier were the fundamental pillars of this reputation. With modern armament this ideal was changed.

Von Rundstedt demanded special N.C.O. schools and received them. He demanded a special propaganda campaign to break down the belief that infantry must be sacrificed in fighting against automatic arms. In this way he sought to dispel the "neurosis against the machine-gun hail," as he called it, and he was successful. When in the German Army there grew up a tend-

ency to believe that mechanization alone could achieve the speedy victories demanded, he was able to redirect the outlook of the responsible persons and to confine the tank specialists to their own tasks. He demanded that even the ordinary infantry should be transported by lorries, supplied to them as occasion arose by the Service Corps of the Army or by vehicles commandeered inside Germany or in the countries to be occupied. This explains why the majority of the incoming recruits after 1935 were still finding their place either in the infantry or in its incorporated arms, and naturally the spokesman of this Army increased his standing and his power.

Once these questions had been settled—and they had been regarded as only tactical details in the larger strategy—Von Rundstedt made it his task to enlighten the General Staff officers and the officers under training for that appointment on the art of higher leadership. He inculcated the belief that whatever technical science produced in improved armaments, however good the results officers of the more technical motorized formations could produce, they all depended in the end on the man who had to break down the last resistance, the rifleman. Fundamental in training of the General Staff officer, therefore, must be the assumption that while the rifleman could march generally at four to five miles speed, he could travel at a pace of forty to fifty miles if his General Staff officer gave him the transport he needed. But what would be the use, argued Von Rundstedt, if an army that could travel only at high speed was forced to meet resistance and penetrate that resistance at the rate, probably, of one or two miles per hour? Then the cumbersome vehicles and troops, not used to hard infantry fighting, would become sitting targets for spectacular slaughter.

The years 1935, 1936, and 1937 saw Von Rundstedt concentrated on this teaching, and he accomplished within those years work which might have occupied another commander under more normal circumstances for decades. His maneuvers were always based on the assumption that the speed of the infantry could be switched from one moment to another from four miles

to forty or vice versa, and the timetables and details of organization and preparation that as a consequence had to be prepared under his care became the pattern which other high leaders had to follow; they became the standard conception in the new German Army.

By the end of 1937 Von Rundstedt found time to pay special visits to staff colleges and other training schools of future higher leaders, and now more than ever he insisted upon a clear recognition of what had led to the downfall of the old German Imperial Army in 1918. One of his most spectacular quotations was made when he addressed an assembly of General Staff officers on a special course in 1937:

From the very beginning Germany's chance of victory lay in the possibility of keeping up a mobile warfare against the Allies. When stalemate came on the Western front it should have been the first duty of the German Imperial General Staff to start mobile warfare afresh in the spring of 1915, instead of which the efforts to regain the initiative were postponed to a date in 1918 when the American aid to the Allies was smashing all hope of victory for the German Army. Time always works against any Continental power at war with England; that has been proved in the past, and is entirely true today, when highly developed armament industries depend more than ever on overseas imports of raw material. A Continental power wishing to defeat England must have either Russia or the United States as an ally in order to have any chance of victory. If this constellation cannot be obtained, then England must be an ally of any power aiming at predominance on the Continent; she must not be neutral. For even as a neutral she can turn the scales of victory as may suit her convenience. The lesson to be learned from this is that land power is useless if not coupled with command of the sea. But sea power alone can strangle a Continental power in the long run.

As leading exponent of this school of thought, Von Rundstedt demanded vainly that the Reich Cabinet should reassure itself upon the position of England in any future war. The attitude of the British Government before the German invasion of Poland deluded the German experts on these questions com-

pletely. Herr von Ribbentrop's personal experiences in England and his subsequent handling of German foreign affairs had misled the German Government into the belief that England would never fight again. This "expert" opinion was handed with the full authority of the Cabinet to the General Staff and to such leading men as Von Rundstedt and others, and while it was very generally accepted, Von Rundstedt remained skeptical. He opposed as much as another important general of the German Army, Walter von Brauchitsch, any armed conflict with England, and he never tired of pointing out the deep gulf between the mentality of the insular English nation and that of the Germans, who were apt to be deluded about the potential moves of their "cousins across the Channel," as Von Rundstedt liked to refer to Britons. Though he could not produce any concrete evidence, he expressed on many occasions his feeling that England might adopt an attitude considerably different from that which Von Ribbentrop and his friends predicted. Von Rundstedt was never entirely convinced of that wishful propaganda which referred to the English people as a degenerate mass of pacifists and weaklings. Not that this ought to be confused with any particular sympathy for England; not that he was an advocate of British-German collaboration: his motives were more guided by a fear that the ambitious plans for world domination by the Germans might receive a severe check at the most inopportune and unexpected moment. When in September 1939 Mr. Chamberlain at last called a halt to the German Government with the alternative of war, Von Rundstedt found his fear realized and his judgment confirmed. His views were founded on a thorough and intimate study of British latent power, which, if time permitted, would mean the same end for Germany as in the last war. Von Rundstedt was never much concerned, of course, about any immediate danger to the German armed forces from England, but he understood what her gathered strength meant on the sea immediately and on the field as the war developed.

His close association with Von Fritsch during the critical days of spring 1938 had led to Von Rundstedt's retirement during the

greater part of 1939. It was natural under the Nazi party power that a man who dreamed of a world dominated by Germany, and Germany itself dominated by the Prussian Junker caste rather than by the new competitors for this overlordship, the Nazi party, should be given the bowler hat once such designs had become too apparent. Nevertheless, at the outbreak of this war there was no question about who would be the leader of the first and most important army groups in the field, and Von Rundstedt was recalled. There must have been a tacit agreement that the differences in opinion disclosed in 1938 should be allowed to rest during the war.

Commanding the German Army Group South that advanced from the eastern tip of Slovakia, Von Rundstedt overcame the Polish forces in the sector Cracow-Lemberg, then broke into the southern Polish defense in the triangle of Kutnow, which he outflanked, and so decided the Polish campaign. He took Warsaw and has been credited with the quick run of operations in Poland. At the beginning of that campaign there were certain stages from which the Germans can draw little military credit. There was a stage when Field Marshal Fedor von Bock had run his divisions against an almost solid resistance on the part of gallant and determined Poles. Even the forced frontal attacks by Von Bock resulted in nothing but heavy casualties for the Germans. It was Von Rundstedt's execution of an almost flawless operation that kept the timetable which had been set for this campaign by the late Colonel General von Fritsch. Once Warsaw had fallen, Von Rundstedt saw his task achieved and rather contemptuously attended the ceremonies that marked the entry of the German troops into Warsaw. When at the beginning of October 1939 Hitler arrived with the Prussian General von Kochenhausen and Major General Rommel, the commander of the General Headquarters, at the airport of Warsaw to supervise the preparations for his triumphal entry into Warsaw, Von Rundstedt dismissed the entire affair as an "*affentheater*" (mock stage) and spoke his mind incisively to the SS general and second in command of the by then all-powerful Gestapo, Heydrich,

who had been very much in favor of elaborate preparations for Hitler's ostentatious entry into the enemy's capital. Nevertheless, both Von Rundstedt and Blaskowitz had to supervise the arrangements for the march past, and neither spared acid comparisons between the meticulous preparations and the work they had done to reach Warsaw at all.

After the conquest of Poland the situation in the east was regarded as anything but stable, and Von Rundstedt was appointed during the winter of 1939-40 to be military governor of Poland, which meant nothing less than German preparation for any "eventualities" in connection with Soviet Russia. He turned a blind eye to the malevolent activities of Frank, the civil governor of Poland, and had as much regard for the lives of the traitor Polish population as for the wild bears and wolves he was shooting in the virgin forests in the heart of Poland. In 1940 he was put in charge of Army Group A. This command covered the center of the front against Belgium and France, and its forces advanced over the Maas and played an important part in Flanders and Artois up to the Channel coast in the first part of the campaign against France. During part of the campaign he pierced the Weygand line on the Aisne and Marne, opening the way for further Panzer attacks into the rear of the Maginot Line. The development of operations in the west had shown that Von Rundstedt had been right—in the military sense—in putting special emphasis on the modernization and expansion of the infantry. During the first and second stages of this campaign in the west it was the preparatory operations of this infantry alone—its main and diversionary attacks—that in each case eventually opened a breach for the Panzer divisions.

At the beginning of the general Russian campaign in 1941 Von Rundstedt was given a command similar to that he had held in Poland. Again he covered the central army group and was commander in chief of the Army Group South. There were indications of possible difficulties for Von Rundstedt in this sector because he had under his command Hungarian formations, Rumanian formations, a large percentage of former Austrian

units, and also, to a certain extent, important divisions of the German Armed Forces proper. Von Rundstedt was at first severely hampered by the destruction of important strategic communication junctions inside Rumania, caused partly by accurate Russian bombing, partly by the efficient work of the Russian intelligence service. Any offensive operation was in danger of being completely paralyzed by these setbacks. In spite of these difficulties, Von Rundstedt, with an army group comprising four separate armies totaling a strength of forty to fifty divisions, put through an operation that has been considered the most flawless and brilliantly executed of prepared plans. In swift strokes he forced Marshal Budenny back, and it stands to the high credit of this Soviet leader that he was not within a few days forced to surrender the major part of the forces under his command. Marshal Budenny did splendid work in extricating his troops from the most difficult positions into which he was forced by Von Rundstedt. All the more credit must be given to Von Rundstedt, because of two factors of considerable importance that worked against him. One arose from the unskillful dispositions of General von Kleist, his chief armored formation commander. Von Kleist, whom we shall meet later and criticize in detail, was recognized to be a complete failure, both as a general and as a disciplinarian. The second adverse factor was that Rumanian ancillary troops acted on more than one occasion with ideas of their own. Their standard of equipment, their organization systems, their staff work, were far below the standard to which Von Rundstedt was accustomed and caused increasing difficulties inside his army-group command.

Von Bock advanced in the center, confident in the knowledge that his southern flank would be well protected by Von Rundstedt. Not only was this confidence fully justified, but Von Rundstedt went beyond the defensive task by seizing unexpected opportunities for attack. On approximately August 25, 1941, he saw the opening for a battle or a series of battles that might bring about the collapse of the military organization of the Red Army. In fact, he saw the opportunity for which origi-

nally the operational plans of the German General Staff had been planned, and which anticipated a quick victory once the first frontier battles had been fought and the large majority of Russian divisions had been defeated, encircled, unable to withdraw, and forced to surrender. This opportunity seemed to occur in the sector of Gomel and Kiev. Von Rundstedt directed that the right flank of Von Bock's army group should separate from his own left flank, should quickly by-pass the Russian resistance, and then join him again, so encircling the great majority of the Russian forces. Von Bock's eyes, however, were transfixed by a more centrally situated and spectacular objective: the speedy conquest of Moscow; and as Hitler and the supreme staffs were mostly at Von Bock's army group, the encircling operation did not result as Von Rundstedt had planned.

It was reported that Von Rundstedt openly accused Von Bock of negligence by delaying the capture of Kiev for five weeks, during which the majority of Budenny's field forces escaped. When in September Kiev was captured, and the busy Dr. Goebbels trumpeted the capture of four armies under Budenny's command, Von Rundstedt must have mocked at the claim. He knew better. It was during this operation that Von Rundstedt recognized the skill of Marshal Timoshenko, who had dispatched to the scene one of his ablest lieutenants, General Dobroserdov. In this general Von Rundstedt met his match.

After the capture of Kiev, which gained Von Rundstedt a valuable base but not the higher strategical objective of smashing the major part of the Russian armed forces, the main effort of the German strategy shifted more than ever to the central sector, with Moscow as the prize. Von Bock's failure here was conspicuous. At the same time Von Rundstedt's "black sheep," Von Kleist, managed by intrigue and by "pulling strings" to claim for himself a victory which, though a considerable force of the Russian Army was involved, was of not more than local value. It was the capture of a considerable amount of Russian troops in the Battle of Uman. Von Rundstedt attached less importance to this than Hitler and his advisers at General Headquarters. Later,

when Von Bock's failure resulted in a near rout of the German forces in front of Moscow, who were faced with the nearly impossible task of disengaging after an unsuccessful offensive, Von Rundstedt was called in to clear up the mess left him by Von Bock.

It was thought adequate to leave Von Kleist, the "victor" of Uman, in charge of the important southern army group. Von Rundstedt had left Von Kleist a perfectly stable front, and it was obvious that though an early capture of Rostov would be welcome, it was not a vital necessity. The season had progressed, and positions for further operations in 1942 had been gained in the south by Von Rundstedt. The ambitious Von Kleist thought differently, and his ensuing operations rather spoiled the effect of Von Rundstedt's strategy. Von Kleist rushed forward to Rostov and by extremely unskillful maneuvering—especially by his inability to recognize at an early date the disposition of Russian reserves—suffered a severe defeat. Von Rundstedt was now too busy on the central sector to lend any assistance to Von Kleist. Thus the end of the southern campaign of the year 1941 was not wholly satisfactory, though not through any fault of Von Rundstedt's.

The abilities of Von Rundstedt had by that time proved themselves to be the best at the disposal of Hitler and completely overshadowed the achievements of the northern army-group commander, Field Marshal Ritter von Leeb, who as a military leader came nearest to Von Rundstedt. By March 1942 Von Rundstedt's leadership was unrivaled in the German Army, and his pre-eminence was recognized when he presided over a strategic conference in Berlin in March 1942. At that time he celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of his entry into the German Army. Hitler marked the occasion in a letter he wrote to Von Rundstedt in which he showed his awareness of the dangers gathering about his own position if he gave too much credit to this man who had established himself as the ablest German general of the war. The letter was written in diplomatic language,

congratulating the field marshal but putting rather less emphasis upon his ability and his achievements than was due.

The conference in Berlin laid down the steps for future offensive operations in the east and reviewed the situation in the west created by the increasing might of Great Britain and the possibility of an invasion of Europe. Von Rundstedt must by this time have seen clearly that Germany could not achieve the early military decision she had hoped for, and he was probably already in doubt about the issue of the entire war. The swift operations resulting in battles of annihilation that had marked the early stages were over. Besides, with the exhilaration of frequent victories beginning to recede, there were too many symptoms of lawlessness, and he was impelled to issue a stern warning. In an order of the day dated March 25, 1942, he says:

"The conceptions of mine and thine are becoming confused. Even the private property of the crews of our tanks which have been put out of action is being stolen."

Such behavior among German troops must not be confused with a cracking in spirit; it was representative of the looting and the greedy thieving that went on during the occupation of western Russia. The High Command was not troubled about it; every general was willing to allow license to the German soldiers as a reward. It would be equally wrong to suppose that Von Rundstedt was concerned with high moral principles. He thought—and had expressed himself in that sense in peacetime—that if soldiery were permitted to steal as they liked from occupied territories they would lose restraint among comrades and increasing relaxation of discipline would spread into military efficiency. It is one of the most closely guarded secrets of the German Army that many of its officers and men were court-martialed and put to death during this period, but it is known that Von Rundstedt treated his own soldiers as sternly as he treated the workers of Thuringia in 1923, even more harshly and with less discrimination. The practical result was to check the tendency to looting between comrades and the unsoldierly spirit that gave rise to it.

Once operational plans for the 1942 offensive against Russia were laid down, Von Bock, Paulus, Kothe-Hoth, Von Mannstein, and others were entrusted with their execution in the field. Von Rundstedt, true to his preconceived ideas, considered the situation in the west equally important. It was known by everybody, civilians in high government positions and military leaders alike, that he was conspicuous among those who had never underestimated Britain's potential power, which by this time had come into effect. Now again was revealed Hitler's anxiety to keep a definite balance of power and reputation among his civilian and military lieutenants. Von Rundstedt was "nailed down" and taken at his word on his warnings in the west, and subsequently sent to France to take over the post of commander in chief in that area from Colonel General Dollman, who owed his appointment largely to his standing as a specialist on the super-heavy and long-range artillery established on the Channel coast. Von Rundstedt commanded roughly twenty to twenty-five divisions in Holland, Belgium, and France, and several small divisions fully mechanized. One of his first steps as commander in chief of Western Occupied Countries was to meet Grand Admiral Raeder, the commander in chief of the German Navy, with whom he discussed problems of collaboration between Navy and Army. The two had always held similar political views, and they were of one mind on the defense of western Europe, though the admiral had little fleet assistance to offer.

The troops under Von Rundstedt's command received a practical expression of his ideas after the Allied commando raid on Boulogne. The German propaganda machine reported that Von Rundstedt had personally decorated a hundred officers and men with Iron Crosses for their skill and bravery during this engagement. What Dr. Goebbels did not report was that within a few days of the raid Von Rundstedt presided over a court-martial that condemned one hundred and fifty officers and men to death, and though one might assume that cowardice was the reason for these executions, it has since been alleged by neutral observers that Von Rundstedt went so far as to put responsible officers

against the wall for technical mistakes committed during the raid, a procedure unusual even in German-Prussian military records.

For a theater that was at least temporarily non-operational he could claim only limited reserves, especially as the battle for Stalingrad and the Caucasus was already in full fury. What handicapped him more than anything else was that for the purpose of better mobility of his forces he had to rely almost entirely on the industry of the occupied countries within his command, with only a very meager part of the output of the Ruhr district. The considerable industries of these districts, which in normal times—that is to say, without interference by the R.A.F.—would have been substantial, became now uncertain. Von Rundstedt perforce imposed upon himself a limitation in the defense of his “fortress”; he relies in Holland and in a good part of Belgium almost exclusively on static defense works, and even these lack a good deal of what his experts consider necessary. The German military governor of the Netherlands, the Luftwaffe general, Christiansen, for example, is relying a good deal upon bluff. On more than one occasion he has offered Dr. Goebbels facilities for showing neutral correspondents part of the “gigantic defenses” erected under his command. This was done with the full approval of Von Rundstedt, who has never despised even the simplest *ruse de guerre*. If one were to accept at their face value the reports given out after these conducted tours, Holland would seem to be one mass of defenses. In reality the cunning Christiansen was touring his guests up and down the country without any maps, and very often they saw part of the same sector again and again, as in the mechanically multiplied effects on a cinematograph. In France proper Von Rundstedt has been keeping back a mobile reserve, which is less than he needs because its expansion is limited by the declining output of industry. This gives a hint of the tactics he is likely to adopt against invasion.

Though the Berlin Propaganda Ministry has impressed on Germany and the world that Von Rundstedt is the foremost

defensive specialist in the German Army (a statement without basis in Von Rundstedt's service record), it may safely be predicted that the field marshal will conduct his defense on extremely offensive lines. That is to say, he will leave it to the static defenses along the Channel coast and along western France down to Spain to delay any Allied combined operation so as to give him time to recognize unmistakably, if possible, the Allied main thrust. It will be more in accord with Von Rundstedt's military ideas if he concentrates a comparatively strong strategic reserve, speedy by its mechanization, which will meet the main Allied attack on ground favorable for the Germans. In an open field battle he might have a chance of turning the scales in his favor. The only alternative would be to separate his troops along the coast, to man all his static defenses, and try to appear in force along the entire coast line, which would leave him hopelessly outnumbered at any given point, exposed to the fate that his lieutenant Von Kleist suffered at Rostov. To ascribe such an unimaginative plan to Germany's ablest general might expose us to sharp surprises.

Von Rundstedt's appointment as commander in chief of Western Occupied Countries required of him a certain amount of diplomatic activity. His dealings with the Vichy Government called for both tact and determination if he were to achieve his object of keeping Laval in power without ceding him any military force whatsoever. By way of tact, Von Rundstedt harped on the theme that had already been used by poor Marshal Pétain when he was suing for an armistice: the understanding between two professional soldiers of experience—soldier to soldier, as Keitel grimly repeated. Von Rundstedt was successful in this sphere. For the rest, determination on the part of the German was easy, for there was no serious risk, though there might have been waste of force. Vichy had no military power, while Von Rundstedt commanded a fully trained and efficient body of men armed with all the up-to-date implements of war. Nevertheless, it was undesirable for Von Rundstedt to use his power, as that would have meant an unwelcome diversion of his mobile strate-

gical reserves. His "tact and good behavior" policy paid him when he was called upon to occupy Vichy territory after the Allied landing in North Africa.

This Axis reverse in North Africa put an additional burden on Von Rundstedt's shoulders. The sphere of his activities was extended to the Mediterranean, and he had to take part actively in the planning of the defense of Italy and the Balkans. Criticizing, as he would know, could not now help the hard-pressed Afrika Korps, but his word was law. Rommel, who hitherto had enjoyed great freedom from the direction of the German High Command, had suffered such conspicuous defeats that, though commander in chief of Axis forces in North Africa and still a great hero to the German public, he was now under the supervision of Von Rundstedt. The delaying actions fought by Rommel and his skillful staff assisted Von Rundstedt in completing the defensive apparatus of southern Europe. Had Rommel not given this indirect aid to the larger operation, he could not have expected a single airplane or a single ton of supplies after his failures to stand at El Agheila, or Tripoli, or even the Mareth Line. From a tactical view Rommel was fighting a lost battle, but every gun given to him to carry on the fight in North Africa as long as possible meant more time for strengthening of the advance guard that protected the European continent.

By January 1943 Von Rundstedt was practically the German resident general in France, and the slight authority of Pétain and Laval, which had been whittled away almost daily since the armistice, had completely disappeared. But while the power of command centered in Von Rundstedt was so greatly increased and his responsibility extended, there was no corresponding increase in the means by which his power could be applied. More than ever had the German High Command to rely upon the skill of this man.

It was during these months that Von Rundstedt made his fist felt in Italy. He forced Mussolini to dismiss the commanders of the Aegean Islands and make drastic changes in the administration of the Italian Army.

Von Rundstedt is today charged with the most responsible command inside the German Army, and his appointment is an indication of the limit of German armament. The gamble of the German High Command in substituting this man's skill for the lack of forces in the field is obvious, and with personal knowledge of Von Rundstedt's military capacity and of the working of his mind, the writer hazards the opinion that Hitler has backed the wrong horse. Even the best thoroughbred would not win Derbys if fed continuously on hay and nothing else, and that is not an extravagant parallel for the extent to which the German Army in western occupied Europe has been starved of reserves.

III

Field-Marshal Erwin Eugen Johannes Rommel

A good part of the fame of most celebrated men is due to the shortsightedness of their admirers. G. C. Lichtenstein,

REFLECTIONS, 1799.

Rommel would pass better for the pure Aryan and the blue-blooded Prussian officer if he were not too obviously anxious to do so. For it is not natural to him, and his jerky mercurial movements follow his unstable projection of himself as he wishes others to see him. A sandy-haired man from the south, he has to imitate the bearing of a Prussian officer because he is not born to the part. He is fitfully arrogant in the way of a man not sure of himself, and his politeness, when he thinks politeness is called for, is apt to be too ingratiating. In all this he is self-conscious, knowing that his shortcomings cannot be concealed. Such a man as commander in the field loses grip, for the common soldier, however impassive he must be, is fully aware of his leader's quality. The eulogiums uttered by Goebbels in 1941-42 wakened no echoes among the rank and file of the Afrika Korps. Neither his bearing nor his language, both abusive and familiar, before the soldiers, were those common to a German officer. Subordinate officers made no secret of their resentment at his insolence. Without anything fine in his nature or his training, he could be roughly genial, but would lose the confidence of the intelligent by his transparent pretentiousness. So far from possessing any

kind of religious feeling, he flouted the susceptibilities of Protestants and Catholics alike, and has been known to blaspheme contemptuously at the expense of church ministrations in the Army, even to ridicule the solemnities of a military funeral. Perhaps his one refusal of Nazism was his repudiation of the Nordic cult with which the party pretended to replace the Christian churches. Many of these things can be said only by those who have seen Rommel among his associates and in front of troops in Saxony's capital, Dresden. All the world may judge of his insufferable bearing in victory. Correspondents have told us how he bragged on the battlefield in the winning days. Berlin broadcast his boastful words when his army stood before El Alamein and the Allies were still gathering their scattered forces and their distant material. He had not come within sight of Alexandria and Cairo, so he said, to be flung back again. He would take those places and get control of the Suez Canal. Temporary success had gone too quickly to his head; he could not carry corn.

He was Hitler's general in a literal sense of the words, which could not be applied strictly to men of the Imperial Army stamp like Von Fritsch and Von Rundstedt. His arrival as a German officer of high rank was achieved by his tough and pertinacious character and mentality, by which, with the favor of Hitler, he managed to steer himself into the midstream of events in a stormy time, when the social conditions about him were in dissolution and Germany's revolutionary leader was looking for sharp swords and ingenious brains with which to further his ruthless purposes. A *faiseur* by nature, Rommel might have been the prosaic company promoter where finance was dominant; in a nation where the Army stood for precedence in every sphere, his aims were fixed always in that milieu. He had no social or financial advantages, and the way into select circles of the Officers' Corps was not open to him. He could not enter a crack regiment, and neither his intellect nor his education fitted him for staff training, which was denied him. On the other hand, there was nothing repugnant to his nature in the Prussian policy

of terrorism and its methods of brutality, nor anything distasteful in the intrigue and the instinct for the main chance that attracted adventurers to the hierarchy of the Nazi party. Hitler needed such men, who were not less congenial to him, because, like Rommel, they had their own grudge against the orthodox army caste, which at heart brooked no rivalry in directing the state, even from Hitler.

Rommel was born on November 15, 1891, at Heidenheim in Württemberg, in southern Germany, where his father was a teacher at the local grammar school. Young Rommel went through the local school and passed from one class to another with the assistance of his father, who had on more than one occasion to remind the director of the school that, after all, young Erwin was going to choose the Army as a career and that to become a subaltern and to be pensioned off as a major he did not need all the education that was necessary for a satisfactory civilian career. Rommel was not admitted to a cadet school, but it was possible for him to enter the Royal Württembergian Army as an ensign at the age of nineteen in 1910. Württemberg was known for a certain liberal interpretation of its recruiting regulations, and the standard required for commissions was not nearly so strict as it was, for example, in Prussia.

At the outbreak of the war in 1914 Rommel was a platoon commander in the 6th Württemberg Infantry Regiment "König Wilhelm I" No. 124. He was subsequently a battalion adjutant, with the rank of second lieutenant, but was refused permission to take General Staff courses, for which he had applied. He was promoted to first lieutenant in March 1915, when he was also decorated with the Iron Cross first class for an exploit in the valley of Dieusson. The action of Dieusson has since been propagated by the Berlin Propaganda Ministry as one of the first instances when modern infantry tactics were used by the "inventor" Rommel, though on the smallest scale, during the last war. What Rommel actually achieved was a simple outflanking

movement. He commanded two platoons, and one morning he was charged to lead a reconnaissance party to explore the fore-field in front of the German lines. While doing so he saw that the link between two French companies facing him was extremely weak. He sent a few sections forward while he himself attacked on the other side of this French position, so creating some confusion behind the first French lines. The French company then surrendered, and Rommel received his Iron Cross first class. This was by no means a rare performance, and was carried out over and over again during the last war both by Allied subaltern infantry officers and German officers with a difference that was not in Rommel's favor. In the successful action accredited to him, during which he was himself wounded, he lost 80 per cent of his men.

Turned down by the German Flying Corps, which he tried to join as an officer observer, he asked for a transfer to a Württembergian Alpine battalion, where he served in most of the operational theaters of the war. He took part in the swift Rumanian campaign under the leadership of Field Marshal von Mackensen, who reaped laurels won for him by his competent chief of staff, Lieutenant Colonel Hans von Seeckt. Rommel found no opportunity of distinguishing himself in the field. During the later campaign in the Carpathians he was in contact with Austrian formations of similar character, and he has related that his experience filled him with a deep contempt for everything south of the German Reich's border. When in 1917 the great German-Austrian offensive (which finally resulted in the smashing Italian defeat at Caporetto) was prepared at the Isonzo, Rommel was transferred there with his special Württembergian Alpine troops. The shortage of officers among these special troops was severe, and so it came about that the young First Lieutenant Rommel commanded formations up to the strength of seventeen companies. He was put temporarily in charge of what was known during that time as "mixed formations," but was never given battalion or regimental command.

The devastating effects of the Caporetto defeat upon the Ital-



British-Combine

FIELD MARSHAL ERWIN EUGEN JOHANNES ROMMEL, the Desert Fox,
who is more showman than strategist.



ian Army are well known, and both German and Austrian formations made tens of thousands of prisoners in a few hours. It is therefore surprising to learn that Rommel was decorated with the highest German order for bravery, the *Pour le Mérite*—the equivalent of the British V.C.—for the capture of nine thousand Italians who had been completely isolated on a hill. Rommel knew there was nothing extraordinary in sending back nine thousand captured Italians. It was usual during that offensive to send back Italian prisoners with a small escort. Some twenty or thirty German or Austrian soldiers would escort up to three or four thousand Italians back to stations where they were collected and taken care of. These prisoners arrived in batches, and many an Austrian or German officer who had captured the same number as Rommel had missed equal recognition just because they followed the rules and kept as many men as possible in the front line. Such is not the way of the careerist. Instead of sending his nine thousand Italians back in batches of two or three thousand, he collected them and their equipment down to the last man and rifle, and then marched back with the whole assembly of them, guarded by the major part of the operational troops in his mixed formation. His report to his senior officer was therefore impressive, and it was not noticed that his device and the large escort employed had withdrawn so much strength from the front line. Rommel's report on these matters shows the value he placed on publicity even then. He did not minimize his performance. In the low opinion he then formed of the fighting qualities of the Italian nation, Rommel was not singular, and he has never concealed it.

After the demobilization of the German Army in 1918-19 a man who could show nothing but a *Pour le Mérite* for a particular action without consistent military performance of distinction was not acceptable to the new Reichswehr leaders, who were very careful to go into the records of their new officers. In fact, there was an unwritten rule at that time that all officers up to the rank of lieutenant colonel must have belonged to the former German Imperial General Staff. While they did duties as com-

pany and battalion commanders their qualifications were noted in the Reichswehr Ministry in Berlin, and they were called upon to pass again through their old General Staff training, so that a nucleus of qualified staff officers was retained for future rearmament. In this close corporation there was no place for Rommel, and exclusion was complete. There was no side entrance, as he had found after trying to enter the more select circle of the Army in early days. Then he was turned away by a caste tradition, now by formidable tests of efficiency superimposed on the same tradition. The raw character of the man, however, was to find an unexpected opening.

Without a pension, and without a job, he became a student at the technical high school of Tübingen. Nothing is known about his scientific attainments at this school, but he soon became a conspicuous leader of its first storm-trooper section. He was, in fact, one of the first SA leaders in southern Germany. There was an occasion when, while acting in that capacity, he attracted the attention of Hitler. The fighting formations of the Nazi party, which had some kind of civil war in view, were not very powerful at that time, and there was a chance that at any time when they entered a town to stage their political demonstrations they might meet serious opposition. The chief SA commander, Hermann Goering, also a knight of the *Pour le Mérite* Order, was not noticeably successful. The only place where the party chief Hitler could speak was Munich, where in the beer cellars a more liberal atmosphere predominated. Hitler wanted to carry his orations further through the country, and SA Company Leader Rommel provided him with the first opportunity.

It was in 1922, on a Sunday morning, when a few hundred storm troopers, under the leadership of Rommel, arrived at the small north Bavarian town of Coburg. Rommel now had a chance to "play at strategy." He surrounded the town, sent parties of shock troops into the streets, beat up the citizens who were just about to go to church, locked the local police in their own station, and then forced everybody to appear on the market square, where in the meantime Hitler had arrived. The future

Führer addressed the good citizens of Coburg in one of his temperamental orations. The citizens were then put on the pavement as spectators of the march past, which was led by Rommel, goose-stepping so well that Hitler remarked: "That Pour le Mérite storm trooper, isn't he every inch a perfect officer?" This remark was quickly carried to Rommel, who had both hands full in evacuating his storm troopers to southern Bavaria. When police reinforcements arrived at Coburg not a single storm trooper could be found. They had disappeared as quickly as they had arrived, and though it was hardly a glorious withdrawal, both Hitler and Goering were elated by the idea that they had been the virtual dictators of Coburg for at least six hours, and they were duly grateful to their little Storm Führer Erwin Rommel.

Rommel soon saw that a continuation of his activity as an organizer for Hitler's mass meetings under storm-trooper "protection" would at best get him a higher rank in that organization. Not too much dismayed by the rebuff he had received when he applied for a commission in the highly efficient Reichswehr, his secret desire was still to join the Officers' Corps, and the more he was cold-shouldered the stronger became his ambition. He was leaving the sphere of the Nazi party underlings and dabbled in strategy. He joined the circle of General Ritter von Epp, a notable Bavarian military theorist, who had developed a scheme of future strategy to be followed by the Reich. In this he was faithfully assisted by Professor Karl Haushofer. The circle around these men interested themselves especially in the question of the reconquest of the former German colonies. Starting from that question, they looked at the globe with eyes that recognized no limit for Germany's sway. Their fantastic plans formed exactly the background of sentimental nationalist resurgence by the aid of which Hitler could expound before excited audiences his ever-changing and expanding popular bait of German world conquest. Among the Reichswehr leaders the Epp-Haushofer circle was regarded as a group of harmless lunatics who were permitted by a kind government to run about

freely. Men like Ritter von Leeb, the pre-eminent Bavarian military leader, thought for once that the Republican Government should use its prerogatives to lock these men up.

One of the fantastic notions that animated these people was the "pillar" theory, which pictured Germany, England, and America acting as the strategical pillars of the world, with the power, if united, to divide it between them. That was the official explanation given out by the circle. Unofficially they desired to have a secret alliance between America and Germany to defeat Britain, and for them the natural development from that position would have been that America should first be isolated by an all-powerful Germany, and later defeated by sea and air, and in the end also by land on the American continent.

Professor Haushofer published a series of books dealing with what was known as geopolitics, which were not quite so crazy as the ideas which he expounded before Hitler and his followers. Though every German scientist of standing at that time refused to be drawn into a discussion with this professor, and, still more firmly, to have any social contacts with him, Rommel was his credulous pupil. Von Epp and Haushofer had seen visions that stirred him. On more than one occasion he accompanied Hitler to their meetings, from which both returned to Hitler's flat in Munich to talk and brood over what they had heard.

Rommel was realist enough to see that after the collapse of the Beer Hall Putsch in 1923 it would be years at least before his ambitions could be realized. Whatever strings he pulled, whatever influences he was able to call upon, he contrived to be put on the official ranking list of the Reichswehr Officers' Corps, though it was in a group upon which the Army would call only when rapid expansion became possible. He managed also to be called up from time to time to serve in various regiments of the Reichswehr. Eventually he became a teacher of tactics at the infantry school in Dresden, with the rank of major. Before that he had served inconspicuously as a company commander in the Reichswehr. As major he was supposed to teach junior officers how to command small units of platoon or even

company strength. This was an admirable opportunity for the publicity in which he was so apt. From his memories of the field he illustrated his tactical lessons and training, and if he could not always give his audiences an example from his own past, he was quick to borrow the experiences of other officers about which he had read. This went well, and he was one of the most popular teachers at the training school. His lessons were not likely to be dull. In colorful descriptions he would after some time leave the more professional side of this training and embark upon the reproduction of actions that in more than one instance had taken place only in his imagination. He was given a battalion and was made a lieutenant colonel. He had, with hard work and within the rules and regulations of the Regular Army, built up a useful reputation. The officers who had passed through his hands were full of admiration for him as a man who understood young officers and who was not a stickler for form.

Meantime political developments favored Rommel extremely well. He knew how to remind Hitler of his presence. The storm-troop leader of the early twenties now turned up as the officer fully versed in modern military science—that is, at least, what he claimed in front of his Führer, and Hitler was impressed. It was not advisable for Hitler to associate himself with Von Epp and Haushofer officially, for that might have caused unrest among foreign diplomats, but he often received Rommel at his Berchtesgaden ober Salzburg residence. Here, in the so-called "*Strategisches Zimmer*" (strategical room), the two played world conquest, Rommel being able to contribute technical knowledge enough to meet any question of Hitler's at that time. Both men were regarded by the senior regular army officers as they would regard imitative boys who had to play with something military, and if not tin soldiers, then large maps.

In a private memorandum Rommel sent to Hitler during this time he wrote: "Our Panzers will draw broad bloody gashes all over the map of the world like the knife of a surgeon. They will tear tracks of death despite all resistance." Huge maps covered the walls of this room, and Hitler's personal A.D.C., Brueckner,

was busy with large quantities of red ink marking the "death tracks." Hitler may have had self-conscious gleams about his preoccupations, for few of his intimate friends were allowed to see the room, certainly not representatives of foreign countries or foreigners at all. Before potential victims Hitler may have felt it wise to conceal his mind; he certainly feared ridicule even more than Mussolini did, and hated murderously those who showed any sense of it.

These intimate conferences gave Rommel courage to start a new attempt to look higher in his military career. It was impossible for a lieutenant colonel to apply for entrance to any regular General Staff examination, but he could claim to have made special studies of modern armored warfare, and he applied for employment in that direction. Given a test, his crash during the examination was resounding. He complained bitterly to his Führer, who consoled him with future promises.

Rommel had failed again, but he could make use of failure. Though at that time, in 1935, he did not get the recognition he sought, he gained valuable knowledge of other officers who had faced the examination board with him. He made a record of the qualifications of these men and vented his feelings among them, balancing his mortification by boasting. He jeeringly told them that the time would come when, in spite of the army bureaucracy, he would be their commander in chief, hinting that he would know how to use other influence—a reference, of course, to his intimacy with Hitler.

Under the rules and regulations of any army Rommel's career should now have come to a quick end. At least he should never expect to reach high rank by conventional paths, but he knew how to secure a position of considerable personal value to him, though of no military importance. He became a liaison officer between the Regular Army and the Hitler Youth. This was entirely useless in the life of an officer as such, as the members of the Hitler Youth would automatically be drafted into the Reich's Labor Service, and from there into the Army, leaving officers attached to the organization at a dead end. Knowing

the limitations of this appointment, Rommel, in his capacity as the expert on German youth recruitment, attended conferences that were presided over by corps and group commanders. The old generals were fully aware that they had to deal with an out-and-out party member, and though discounting his military aspirations, they could not entirely ignore his considerable political influence. During this time he wrote a book called *Infantry Attacks*, which was put on the official army list of recommended training books. This book is a compilation of material which the titular author was able to collect while he was teacher at the infantry school in Dresden.

He received the appointment of full colonel on Hitler's direct command. Rommel was put in charge of the Führer's headquarters, where by this time the conviction prevailed that war might break out at any time. When Austria was occupied Rommel left his duties about the headquarters to become commandant of the Austrian war school in Wiener-Neustadt. Here he bore himself with the arrogance of a man who fancied himself to be not only the confidential adviser of Hitler, but also his prospective right hand in future military operations on a large scale, and the rising generation of Austrian officers saw no reason to question his importance.

Throughout this time Rommel had found opportunity to make himself acquainted with an operational plan of the German High Command called Plan Sud (Plan South). This plan was a direct result of the closer military collaboration that followed the completion of the Axis alliance treaty between Italy and Germany, and it was the basis of German military assistance to Italian operations in North Africa. The founder and early executant for this plan was the German general, Von Tschirmer. Hitler had been aware of Rommel's interest in colonial expansion from the early days of the Epp-Hauschofer school, and now urged that Rommel should be permitted to study the more concrete results of General Staff work in Berlin. Hitler's demand was so far effective that when Von Brauchitsch went to Libya in 1937 Rommel was attached to his staff. The Italian governor

general of North Africa, Marshal Balbo, said on that occasion, "The Nazis are now sending us here even their future inspectors." Von Brauchitsch returned disappointed about the Italian military preparations. Rommel obtained special "sick leave," and used it to see Benghazi, Derna, Tobruk, and Bardia, through which he traveled by car, having refused an airplane that was offered to him by the Italian army authorities. He went on to make a close inspection of the scheme of defense in Sicily and southern Italy. After that he turned civilian and went as a tourist to Egypt, where people heard of Herr Rommel, a sick German patient, traveling all over the Suez Canal region, and, again by motor car, in the direction of Cyrenaica.

Returning to Germany, he had long conferences with Hitler, whom he convinced that General von Tschirmer's preparations for the so-called German desert corps were unrealistic and inadequate. Von Tschirmer remained in command, but he had to adopt a good deal of Rommel's plans, which resulted in the most elaborate preparations ever given to the special expeditionary force of any army. The Propaganda Ministry prepared opinion inside Germany with a great campaign for the recovery of the lost German colonies. General Ritter von Epp, who had been given the lucrative but not highly influential position of Reichs governor of Bavaria, became the chief of the Nazi party colonial office. At first it seemed that this new propaganda campaign was started simply to give Von Ribbentrop something to bargain with when negotiating with the Allied governments, and especially with Great Britain.

The Army, however, thought and acted in its own terms. Two special training centers and two training grounds were founded in Germany. Schleswig-Holstein harbored one, Bavaria the other, and in both the barracks and training halls, while closed to the outside world, were adapted to tropical conditions. By a mixture of steam and heated air, the soldier was acclimatized, as far as that was possible, by artificial means. Special equipment down to the smallest detail was tried out again and again; special diets were found by the medical staff of the Ham-

burg Tropical Disease Institute, which also supplied the nucleus of the medical personnel attached to this "Desert Corps," as it was known at that time. Soldiers undergoing this training had to subsist with a minimum of drinking water, and the selection boards had their hands full to sift out the candidates. The first difficulties appeared in the medical field. The soldiers, unused to an ersatz tropical climate, developed boils and skin trouble of a peculiar type. Experiments with vitamin pills and other medicaments led to special food lozenges.

Another test imposed was equally severe. To the long, wild sand dunes of eastern Pomerania, near the little port of Lebau and also in East Prussia, on the long sand dunes guarding the Haff Lakes, huge vans were transported with apparatus by which artificial dust and sand storms were created. Sandproof casings for the engines and the interior of the tanks were gradually developed. The strength of this corps amounted roughly to less than one division—that is, ten thousand officers and men. This new branch of the German Army was not at first obvious enough in its importance to interest Rommel's ambitions. He accompanied Hitler during the invasion of Czechoslovakia, in his old post at Hitler's headquarters, which in its traveling form had a remarkably comprehensive scheme of protection for which he was mainly responsible. He is credited with having had the idea of a dual general headquarters, that is, one that could be transported by rail in five trains with mounted anti-aircraft guns and armor plating, comprising a battalion for guard duties, a large train of wagons specially constructed for map tables, in addition to Hitler's own private wagons and guest cars for generals and foreign visitors. A less imposing expression of this design did, in fact, appear in the shape of flying general headquarters, for which twelve huge Junkers troop carriers were converted to provide the accommodation that would have been found in the train, with the difference that anti-aircraft and guard protection was unnecessary and effective protection was given by a strong fighter screen to the G.H.Q. squadron.

Rommel served in the same capacity in the campaign in

Poland, and took care that the Führer did not endanger his precious life. Such care seems to have been necessary here, owing to an unwonted recklessness on Hitler's part. As soon as he saw the concentrated German armed forces making good progress, his triumphant curiosity led him to discard for the time his usually morbid anxiety for his personal safety and to hurry forward to get a good view of that process of annihilation of the Polish nation he had publicly decreed. Rommel's precautions, however, did not go unrewarded. He was appointed general in command of a Panzer division, which was later to be given a conspicuous part in the defeat of France.

He has arrived. Henceforth he leaves the inglorious post of Hitler's personal attendant to take command in the field, and later, with increasing responsibility, to experience a considerable run of luck. With rapid promotion to the highest rank, he will feel compensated at last for the prestige of staff training that had been denied him. It is no mere coincidence that Rommel commanded the leading Panzer division in the Army Group A in the west, the group that under the command of Field Marshal von Rundstedt broke through and finally outflanked the Maginot Line. Von Rundstedt's maneuver opened the way for vast and spectacular advances by mechanized formations, and Rommel, pushed forward by Hitler, Goebbels, and Himmler, reaped a good deal of the credit, though he was only executing tactical measures under the direction of corps, army, and group commanders. It was his 7th Panzer Division which claimed for itself the nickname of "Phantom Division" because of its speedy advance. Among its exploits was the capture on the market square of the little French town of St. Valéry-en-Caux of eight generals and twenty-five thousand men, the majority of whom belonged to the B.E.F. For Rommel this prize was no more than a stroke in the luck of war, for it was inevitable that many prisoners, senior officers among them, would be taken once Von Rundstedt's circumspect plan was successful.

Making the most of his personal prerogatives, Rommel commandeered a heavy 32-ton tank for his own use and protection.

The man in charge of the motorized infantry incorporated into his Panzer division was Georg von Bismarck, a descendant of the famous chancellor of the Reich. Georg von Bismarck was a well-known specialist on the subject on which Rommel had claimed to be the leading specialist in the German Army. Aware that if it came to the test he would certainly not prove the expert he claimed to be, Rommel practiced here one of his distinguishing gifts—namely, the faculty of taking the measure of another man and recognizing his value. He enlisted Von Bismarck's services for his own purpose. The subordinate was subsequently allowed to complete his knowledge under field conditions in the Russian campaign, but was earmarked for service under Rommel in North Africa. The campaign in France brought Rommel the coveted decoration of the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross.

With Italy's entry into this war the larger German plans for North Africa were brought into being. Marshal Graziani received his overwhelming defeat at the hands of General Wavell. The Italian part in the war on the Western front had been inglorious and inconspicuous. Their advance along the French Riviera was more a stage affair than a military operation, and it exposed nothing but Mussolini's mean spirit of revenge for mortification at the hands of a more powerful neighbor. Graziani's defeat showed the Italian war machine was unequal to a severe test, though the Italian General Staff contains a limited number of officers who can compete with any of their opposite numbers in the German or Allied armies. These more competent Italian officers, however, had little chance of putting their ideas into practice, and the hopeless position in which Italy found herself after the defeat of Graziani made the entrance of the German Desert Corps, which by 1941 had been renamed the Afrika Korps, all the more spectacular. General von Tschmirer had been relieved of command, and Rommel took over.

The preparations of the German General Staff for this expedition, as has been seen, had been very thorough, and Rommel had chosen his generals with understanding of what he needed.

With *carte blanche* given to him by Hitler, he was able to select the cream of the brains of the German Army. General Ritter von Thoma, one of the few higher officers who had gained experience during the civil war in Spain, was fully capable of conducting operations in the entire North African sphere himself, but he had to serve as field commander of the Korps under Rommel's major direction. Supply Chief Cruewell was an expert in his job; Georg von Bismarck had proved himself under Rommel in France; and Generals Schmidt, Von Ravenstein, and General Stumma had all won confidence in the German Army. With all this went an extremely strong air umbrella, later under the command of Field Marshal Karl Kesselring, against which at the beginning the R.A.F. had little to show.

Rommel's attack and our counterattack in 1941 did not change the situation decisively. Then in 1942 Rommel, with an expeditionary force and almost completely independent in command, advanced up to El Alamein. The advance shows perfect staff work and first-class collaboration between the various branches of his force. After reaching El Alamein, Rommel was at the height of his career. He returned to Berlin and, in the presence of Hitler, faced a huge audience in the Sport Palace, where the spontaneous enthusiasm with which he was received was noticeable beside the controlled greetings accorded to the Führer. In fact, it seemed that Dr. Goebbels had slightly overdone the Rommel propaganda inside Germany. It was all in the interest of the Nazi party and of Hitler himself that a man renowned as a Nazi should be acclaimed before all Germany, so that the growing reputation of the other generals of the Regular Army should at least not gain in comparison.

On October 3, 1942, Rommel said to a party of foreign journalists:

"Today we stand one hundred kilometers from Alexandria, and hold the gateway of Egypt, with the full intention of getting there, too. We did not get there with any intention of being flung back sooner or later. You may rely on our holding fast to what we have got. . . . American material," he added, "is of

no particular importance, although the new American tanks are much improved weapons."

It is curious to hear that this former storm-trooper thug, who had shown no compunction in brutal exercises of Hitler's infamous gang, complained in the same interview about the "Maoris, head-hunters, and such troops in the Eighth Army," and of their "unfair fighting methods." Possibly Rommel was visualizing the shape of things to come and thought that, as a field marshal, a tone of discrimination would be becoming and perhaps provide him with a loophole through which to escape indictment.

In his advance toward the El Alamein position it became obvious to Rommel that his Italian allies were neither accustomed to this kind of pace nor willing to accept the essence of the century-old slogan "*Travaillez pour le roi de Prusse*," which painfully fitted them in this campaign. It was in the unfailing irony of fate that the man who had dismissed Italian military claims as nonsense, and who had been convinced in the last war that the Italian was never a match for any decent soldier of any nation, was now impelled to issue a special secret order endorsed: "*To Officers Only*." This order read:

The Germans have always been good soldiers; therefore they must not boast. Still less must they belittle the achievements of the soldiers of other countries.

The Italian, of course, is not quite the same as the German soldier, the former having his own peculiarities. He is a different human being. Therefore it would be wrong to judge him by German standards.

He fights as well as he can—that must be appreciated. It is unworthy to laugh at our ally and to talk about his soft points. We must try to see his good points.

Though this secret order was apparently issued as some sort of protection for the Italians, it had an entirely different meaning a few weeks later when Rommel showed, during active operations, what he really thought of his allies and how much he despised them. Rommel had the average German feeling toward

the Italians, who are considered by the German to be as much "non-Aryan" as the Jew, the Arab, the Japanese, and everybody else who has not the complexion of a schoolgirl and the hair of the blond beast. They do not themselves always approach this ideal, of course, but their spokesmen excuse their less "Nordic" compatriots as being of the inevitable mixture that resulted from the thousand-year-old migration of tribes through central Europe, which left inevitable traces. To the nations that are not so "fortunate" as to be even of this mixture they are quick to add the stigma of "filthy, lazy, mentally degenerate Southerner," a propagandist projection that has now to exist in the imagination of the Nazi-schooled German.

Meantime Rommel, always avid for publicity, and certain of the backing of the past master in that art in Berlin, Dr. Joseph Goebbels, neglected no means of increasing his popularity in Germany. By this time a rumor had spread through the German and Italian rank and file in Africa that Rommel was by no means the grand master of strategy he claimed to be. On various occasions, when decisions of great significance had to be taken, he was neither at his headquarters nor could he be reached by his staff. He had simply disappeared in the desert to inspect units on the march, and possibly to take the salute of the troops he visited—a ceremony of which he has always liked to be the center. He would be conscious, no doubt, when his troops goose-stepped past him, even in the middle of the desert, that he was the German general most in the public eye. These distrustful murmurings became so persistent that one of the younger officers of his immediate entourage broadcast on the Berlin radio an account of Rommel's personal activities that was intended to dispose of criticism and at the same time to give some explanation of the conspicuous absence of the commander in chief at certain grave moments, absences which by that time could no longer be denied. Lieutenant Berndt gave this account:

We of the Afrika Korps call him the General of the High Road. He is in the desert literally from dawn until late at night. He does not direct operations from a desk in headquarters—that is what he

has got his staff officers for—but he is always seeing for himself, experiencing things himself, and personally influencing his troops. A few radio communications, an improvised wire, connect him with his headquarters. He is also a wizard at map reading. Rommel's ability to change his decisions at a moment's notice whenever the enemy gives him a chance is what characterizes him most. There were times when he drove his commanders to exasperation by changing his decisions. Afterward nobody denied that he had been right. He actually changed his mind ten or eleven times, and countermanded a previous order during a single battle.

A corroboration of this broadcast impression came from Cairo, when Lieutenant Otto von Tiedemann, a war correspondent captured by the Eighth Army, spoke of his experiences while he was attached for four weeks to Rommel's headquarters.

In Lieutenant Berndt's broadcast, though it was intended for a different purpose, we can read innocent implications that reveal the real Rommel. There is truth in what this officer said, but the freedom of movement attributed to Rommel and exercised by him applies to a divisional Panzer commander, not to the commander in chief of an entire theater of operations who, by the nature of his appointment, has to be chief of the High Command, chief of the General Staff, and Army Group commander in one person. These mercurial characteristics of the general had their full value—and there is great value in them when exercised in their appropriate place—when he was called upon only to fight armored battles in the center of Cyrenaica, and there they won him a great victory. In the course of that battle the commander in chief of the Axis expeditionary force in North Africa was never called upon to give decisions that went beyond the tactical issue of the moment. As soon as that field battle was decided, and Rommel had to give judgment on the broader issues of strategy, he exposed his limitations. He still saw only the immediate gain, which was Tobruk. He had another success, it is true, but it was a tactical one. He won the port of Tobruk and lost the strategical victory that lay in the immediate pursuit of the retreating Eighth Army.

Immediately before the Battle of El Alamein he failed again to grasp the larger issue. His attempts to pierce our defense and to outflank us from the south were not the operations of a first-class general. Every diversionary trick played against him by Generals Alexander and Montgomery worked. Our dummy tank battalions or faked movements of bodies of troops were always taken by Rommel for the real thing.

Once checked in his advance, he prepared four positions in which he might repel our opening attack. His plan of defense was too simple in conception and has since been well exposed. Massing Panzer divisions at the northern and southern ends of his position, and leaving a weak infantry nucleus (inevitably Italian) in the center, he intended to draw us on to his weak position and then to close upon us from the north and the south with his armored forces. That that scheme did not work out was not surprising, considering the qualities of the Allied generals who opposed him. It makes understandable the criticism voiced against Rommel by his second in command, General Ritter von Thoma, who, like other Afrika Korps generals, saw that Rommel was more concerned with trying to "steal his thunder" than with planning circumspect military operations. It is not enough to have the qualifications for a tactical teacher at a war college, or to have command of all the strings that one can "pull" at the Führer's Reich Chancellery, or to cruise the desert in a private car and to enjoy the camp life, which must be hard for the first-line troops. The place of the commander in chief is at his headquarters, where he can control developments from minute to minute and not in the first or second line of battle, where he has control only over details of the tactical issue.

General Dan Pienaar, the commander of the South African Springboks in the Middle East theater, once said about Rommel, "I don't consider him clever or cunning, but he is determined and tenacious." When Rommel suffered his reverse at Alamein this opinion was shown to be well-founded. With a brutal ruthlessness scarcely equaled even in German military history, he left behind the majority of the Italian infantry, without trans-

port, without water, without medical supplies, hopelessly abandoned in the scorching desert under a blazing sun. These allies of his became mere cattle in the face of the imperious need to save his German troops, conduct which made sarcasm of his knighthood of the order *Pour le Mérite*. Possibly he had calculated that the "soft" British generals would allow themselves to be diverted to the south to capture these Italians. It must have been a surprise to him to find that his opposite numbers understood the situation too well and felt pretty certain of bagging the Italian divisions in the south, or what was left of them in due time.

Rommel then started on his two-thousand-mile retreat into Tunisia, and here even the most serious military critics have exaggerated the military skill he was called upon to exercise. But a scrutiny of everything during this retreat, down to the smallest tactical detail, forces the conclusion that Rommel did nothing, and that the halts which occurred were deliberately chosen by General Alexander and General Montgomery in order to give opportunities to the supply systems of their army. The ideal geographical positions at El Agheila and at the salt lakes of Misurata, and finally the considerable artificial defenses at Tripoli proper—all these opportunities were missed by him, and he continued his flight as soon as General Montgomery's disposition of troops indicated that he meant business.

The fighting in the Mareth Line proper has been falsely judged for some time. The official report of the Italian general, Messe, who commanded the 1st Italian Army at Alamein, and who was again in command of a considerable force of Italians at Mareth, throws some light on Rommel's grasp of the situation. Messe complains that when he had repulsed the first frontal attack by the Eighth Army he was in an admirable position to meet any further attacks, and he protested to Rommel, as commander in chief, against orders that he should withdraw immediately. And naturally Messe complains also that once this order was given none of the motor transport was ready to get the troops out. That transport had long before been taken by the

Germans themselves. What General Messe probably does not see is the fact that with all his vaunted "genius" Rommel could not make up his mind, and that he fell back to the hourly decision theory which he had applied so successfully during tactical tank battles at Bir Hacheim, "Knightsbridge," and Sidi Rezegh. But in this case it resulted in an up-and-down traveling movement of his armor between the Maknassy-El Guettar sectors and the eastern part of the Mareth Line.

Here was Rommel's greatest opportunity to show whether he was the man that Dr. Goebbels in Berlin had claimed him to be; but one who knew him personally, who knew his capacity for bluff and his pose as a master of strategy to be pretense, in spite of his brilliant tactical knowledge, understands that he was bound to fail. His Italian allies could be certain only of one thing: that they would be left behind as an addition to the mine fields that were sown in the path of the advance of the Allied armies. The role of leading their enemy into mine fields possibly had the worst repercussions upon a nation at home in Italy that already resented the arrogance of the German Luftwaffe and Gestapo and SS officers as well as the German regular army officers who were gradually commandeering Italy as a full base.

For in Rommel the Italians had to deal with a man who was suffering continuously from a sore sense of inferiority, based upon the knowledge, of which in early days he had been so often reminded, that he did not belong to the army caste and that he could imitate it only in the arrogance and self-confidence inculcated for generations by its national prerogatives. With all the rank and power that had been given to him by another man whose character is even more acutely warped by an inferiority complex, Rommel still smarted under Field Marshal von Rundstedt's reference to him as "that clown who commands the Adolf Hitler circus." (Hitler's traveling G.H.Q.) Confronted with an audience mainly composed of the German Officers' Corps and German rank and file, he might have shown something of discretion and consideration, but a soft Italian environment was too much for him and simply stimulated him to display

the Prussian at his worst. Perhaps nothing leaves a truer picture of this man than his bearing during a visit to a captured British field hospital, where German and British doctors were working alike and together to tend the wounds of British and German soldiers. It is understood that on such occasions each commander in chief should address not only his own chief medical officers but never forget to speak a word or two to the enemy's. Rommel made it a point to ignore the British medical officers completely, expecting thereby to impress the Italian officers on the staff. Later history will show that the effect was the opposite to what he intended it to be.

BRANCH COLL.

IV

Field Marshal Erhard Milch

In the ordinary business of life industry can do anything which genius can do, and very many things which it cannot.

H. W. Beecher, PROVERBS FROM PLYMOUTH PULPIT, 1870.

Field Marshal Erhard Milch was born on March 30, 1892, in Wilhelmshaven, a son of the chemist shopowner Milch, who later, during World War I, received the singular rank of quartermaster general in command of medical stores for the German Army. Milch, Sr., had thus a general's rank, though inside the German Army his position was regarded as even less than that of the accountant general, who used to rank lowest inside the German War Office organization.

Having passed his matriculation in 1910, the future field marshal became an ensign in the 1st Heavy Artillery Regiment at Königsberg in East Prussia, and in August 1911 he was made a lieutenant in that regiment, the rank he still held at the outbreak of the war. Milch had chosen a heavy artillery regiment because he was keenly interested in technical problems, which he could learn better in such a formation than anywhere else. But that did not satisfy his mind, and by 1915 he successfully applied for a transfer to the Imperial German Air Force. Here again the technical side, such as navigation and observation, interested him more than the spectacular duties of the fighter squadrons that were gaining their first laurels during that year. He became a reconnaissance flier, mainly occupied in directing and supervising the fire of artillery. Promoted to first lieutenant,

he became chief of the reconnaissance formations 5 and 204 and later of the pursuit group No. 6. He was then able to secure for himself one of the rarest appointments inside the German Imperial Army Air Force, that of Air General Staff Officer attached to higher staffs as air specialist. This appointment brought him the rank of captain in 1918. By that time Milch was known as a circumspect and careful planner and an industrious, capable, and ambitious young officer; and it was these qualities that led to his quick promotion at an early age. Malicious tongues claimed that to get this General Staff appointment Milch, Jr., had pulled strings in the proper quarters by means of his father, and the gibe could not be countered by any obvious inclination on his part for dangerous active flying under field conditions. This accusation has been repeated since, and the legend goes that his nickname at that time was the "apothecary's flying son," which would express the conscious superiority of other cavalry officers who had become members of the Imperial Flying Corps. It is established, however, that the same officers were greatly impressed by the organizing abilities of the twenty-six-year-old captain.

After the Armistice thousands of German pilots had no opportunity to carry on their profession, not even within such restrictions as were now imposed on the active infantry, cavalry, or artillery officer, for officially the German Flying Corps was to be disbanded. Milch, however, managed to become commanding officer of a flying organization attached to the semi-legal *Grenzschutz* (Border Defense Corps), a predecessor of the Reichswehr. In the special art of camouflage then being cultivated by generals and General Staff officers commanding the ground forces of the semiofficial corps—the art of disguising from Allied inspectors the actual strength of a corps—young Milch was worthy of his exemplars.

When the existence of this postwar flying corps came to an end Milch sought an opening with the civil air organizations that were then springing up like mushrooms. He first studied economics at the University of Königsberg and at the technical

high school of Danzig. His perhaps innate grasp of commercial essentials was thus developed with a wide knowledge that was to be invaluable to him in his future career.

He then joined a private commercial company, the Lloyd-Ostflug, the first civil air company in eastern Germany, and from that experience became a chief organizer for the Danzig Air Mail Service. By the end of 1920, when many of his former brother officers were unemployed and, like Goering, were trying their fortunes as commanding officers of smaller or larger illegal armed formations, the twenty-eight-year-old Milch was managing director of the Danziger Luftpost. In 1923 he became a technical director of the Junkers Air Traffic Company, at that time the most important air-transport firm in Germany. The Junkers works were compelled to run their own air-transport company because they had little chance of finding buyers for the aircraft produced in their own factory. Milch was president of the commission that merged a number of smaller German air-transport companies with the Junkers Company, which appeared in 1926 as the well-known Lufthansa Limited and was later to become Germany's foremost air-transport concern.

At this time grave accusations were launched against Milch as managing director of this new air trust. He was accused of having had, in some manner not specified, financial transactions involving the consolidation of shares of the smaller companies, and of making a nice profit for his own pocket. Less precise, but equally grave in their implications, were charges that Milch accepted commissions from certain aircraft factories, in return for which, it was understood, he would close his eyes to the security measures that were necessary for aircraft transporting passengers. None of these charges were brought to a legal test, but it is significant of their serious origin that such an important newspaper as the democratic *Berliner Tageblatt* identified itself with the accusers.

During these years 1924-26 Milch was thought to be fit for the post of a commercial ambassador who traveled to South America and the United States to study the developing air lines

there and to try to secure a share for the German air companies. By 1927-28 Milch could claim that the German air lines had grown out of their baby shoes. The Junkers at Dessau were producing air liners that were both reliable and economical in their upkeep. They were heavy machines that could carry a considerable amount of freight or passengers..

The Reichswehr was faced with a problem of its own. Though illegal rearmament of ground forces had been going on steadily for some time, no hidden activity in air rearmament had been found possible. Any commitments in this direction would have been too conspicuous to be concealed under any cloak. It was necessary to look for something entirely outside the actual organization of the Reichswehr Ministry. In the eyes of the military schemers Milch and the Lufthansa had qualified themselves for such a task. It might have been noticed at this time that a great part of the army and navy budget of the Republican Reichswehr was designated as "transferable." The meaning of this term never became completely clear to the average German, and even foreign powers and their observers, whose business it then was to recognize the direction of German government expenditure, did not see or did not choose to see through this financial blind of the Accountant Department of the Reichswehr Ministry. "Transferable" meant nothing less than that though the Watch Committee of the Parliament might allot millions for specified branches of the armed forces on the ground, the officers responsible were quite at liberty to use part of these funds for a purpose not specified.

Here Milch's slimness again found an opening and enabled him to serve his masters. As he has said himself, he could "with the application of a spanner transform the Junkers aircraft engaged on civil duties into bombers almost overnight." Such a process, of course, is rather too simplified, and it needs money for its performance on a large scale, so much money, in fact, that no private company would have been able to produce it. The Reichswehr stepped in with its "transferable" funds. Quite apart from this illegal transfer of money, certain civilian departments

of the German Government were willing to assist the Lufthansa, though not with the same purpose as that of the Reichswehr, and probably without full knowledge of it.

Milch knew how to use in air armament all the money he could lay his hands on. He did not dabble in politics as did many of his former brother officers. Content to be regarded by the Reichswehr as "Nationalist, reliable . . .," he did not add any emphasis to that useful classification, because he had a great competitor in Dr. Hugo Eckener, who received lavish support from the civilian departments of the German Government. Dr. Eckener, who constructed zeppelins, was a Democrat and had great popular support. Though Milch was all for the German people being made air-minded, as he called it, he was scornful at the many millions sunk in Dr. Eckener's enterprise, which he considered useless for any future military purpose. The Reichswehr agreed with him. Therefore, if Milch was to get any chance in competition with this favorite of the government, he had to adopt at least a rather colorless political position. This did not prevent him from having in secret the closest contact with Hermann Goering, distinguished as an airman in the last war and one of Hitler's chief lieutenants in the internal political struggle for power.

Goering regarded himself as the champion of anything connected with air organization in the Nazi party, but, as always, he also knew his own limitations. He knew, for example, that he could not command a fraction of the organizing talent possessed by the ambitious, industrious, and intelligent young Milch. He had noticed, too, that this young man had little political ambition and was probably the best back-room boy for Nazi plans that could be found. Therefore, when Goering managed to obtain an appointment as Reichs Commissar for Air on the occasion of the forming of the first National Socialist Cabinet in January 1933, he was quick to appoint the managing director of the Lufthansa, Milch, to be Secretary of State under his command.

The Treaty of Versailles, though continuously broken by



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FIELD MARSHAL ERHARD MILCH, who built up the Luftwaffe.

Germany in secret, had not yet been repudiated, and if Hitler had now openly flouted one of its most important clauses under which any German air force was abolished, foreign governments and peoples would have been less easily deceived by his profession of "peaceful intentions." Goering and Milch therefore devised a scheme by which they hoped gradually to accustom foreign nations to the idea that Germany was developing an air force of her own. This trick of gradualness succeeded, for the few who foresaw its consequences were unheeded. The N.S.F.K., the National Socialist Flying Corps, seemed an innocent beginning, and as an enlarged flying club of the Nazi party it caused no alarm. Yet here was the embryo of the Luftwaffe. The N.S.F.K. sent its flying aces to international air races, where they took part in balloon competitions, and it was busy in many other fields throwing sand in the eyes of foreign governments. Financial aid from the German Government was on a lavish scale. The departments of the Reichswehr which had collaborated with Milch during the years before Hitler came into power were now more busy than ever in preparing for the air force to come.

When Hitler declared to the world the rearmament of the German Reich and announced the creation of a German Luftwaffe, Milch, by now a colonel, was again Secretary of State under Reichs Minister Hermann Goering. With the German craving for the justification of their breaches of the Versailles Treaty, Goering and Milch had started some years before the official appearance of the Luftwaffe a campaign that was at once to create a sense of wrong inside Germany and to arouse sympathy outside Germany. It was propaganda that succeeded completely at home (and too well abroad). Hence the formula of the "shameful Treaty of Versailles," the attempt to recover national pride by reference to "hopelessly outnumbered German armed forces," the effrontery of the assertion that Germany did not possess a single airplane for military purposes before 1935. All this prepared the popular ground both at home and abroad for the sudden appearance of an enormous air ministry and a huge staff for the Luftwaffe in 1935. Goering took a great

deal of the credit for this organization, but it was Milch who had laid the foundation years before. No one inside or outside Germany believes that this organization, which was to be the brains of the expansion and direction of the Luftwaffe, could be built up within two years. Yet here is the completed administration that Secretary of State Milch presented to the surprised world after he had claimed that as late as 1934 not a single aircraft for the Luftwaffe was in existence:

AIR MINISTRY AND LUFTWAFFE

Reichs Minister and Commander in Chief (*Goering*)

Secretary of State (*Milch*)

Chief of the General Staff of the Luftwaffe (*General Wever*)

Operational Staff, Organization Staff, Training Staff, Quartermaster General, Chief of the Communications and Signals Department, Chief of the Medical Service

INTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENTS

Air War Academy for General Staff officers of the Luftwaffe
Higher Air War School (*a school for the preparation of officers who wish to enter the Academy*)

Ministerial-Administrative Departments of the Luftwaffe under the care of the Secretary of State and independent of the office of Chief of the General Staff

Chief of Air Defense

Inspector General of the Luftwaffe

Technical Office

Luftwaffe administration

Department for reserves and reinforcements

Department for personnel

Office of the Minister

Central office, comprising the staffs for the Minister and the Secretary of State

TEN OPERATIONAL INSPECTORATES

Reconnaissance formations and air photography

Bomber Command

- Fighter Command
- Anti-aircraft artillery
- Air security and material
- Ground motorization
- Communications and signals
- Seaplane fliers
- Pilot training school
- Education and general training for officer cadets (*comprising the command for the Luftwaffe schools*)
- Other departments of the Air Ministry in Berlin were:
 - Department for air traffic and air sport
 - Department for air supervision (*police*)
 - Department for meteorological service
- Department for aircraft ground control (*day and night flying*)

It is well to remember that on January 31, 1933, Goering had become Commissar for Air; on May 5, 1933, the Air Ministry was formed; and on March 1, 1935, the Luftwaffe announced its existence officially. Milch's lies are therefore conspicuous even in a considered system of deception and are not to be modified by excuses.

More than ever now Milch was careful to abstain from political questions and discussions. Only on one occasion had he overstepped this self-imposed regulation, and that was when he was called upon to save the life of a close friend and brilliant airman, Ernst Udet. Udet was the victor of sixty-two combats in the last war, Knight of the Pour le Mérite, ace stunt flier during the postwar period, organizer of air expeditions to Africa and the Arctic, brilliantly superior in daring enterprise to the discreet and business-minded Milch, and Milch did not underrate him. Since 1933 Udet had been the quartermaster general designate, whose department was officially announced only on March 1, 1935. Udet, always an adventurer, was not quite content with that silent and less conspicuous work. As a side line he had taken over an air squadron belonging to the storm-trooper organization. It has never been discovered whether he was so close a friend of the chief of staff of the Brown Shirt formations,

Captain Roehin; that he was willing to take part in any of that leader's deeper schemes, but it is known that he was at the top of the list of those who were to be executed during the June purge of 1934.

Udet was not friendly with the Reichswehr hierarchy, for he had been frequently cold-shouldered in the postwar years by these conservative militarists to whom distinction in the new arm was not enough. Between Goering and Udet, also, there was a special personal animosity, which had its rise in the days when Goering became the successor of the famous Richthofen in command of his squadron during the last war. Though Udet gave Goering credit as a bold pilot and did not grudge him the appointment, he criticized him as being an unskilled fighter who was more brave than clever. Naturally Goering's vanity could not stand such criticism, and he never hid his resentment. Against all this, Milch not only saved his friend from the firing squad, but procured his appointment as quartermaster general in 1935.

Here, in spite of Milch's rule, was enough of participation in internal politics to make Himmler and Goebbels his watchful enemies. Now followed a sustained attack upon him by rumor, against which he retained his post in the Air Ministry through the support of his Minister, Goering, who knew very well that he could never build up, expand, and command such a vast organization as the Luftwaffe was intended to become without the assistance of a master of big business such as Milch.

Milch's ancestry has been frequently under discussion, for his position among anti-Semite Nazis gives it singular meaning. At one time he was identified with a family of the same name who before 1914 owned a large artificial manure factory in the province of Posen. That link-up could not be established, but then it was claimed that his mother was a Jewess. Higher Gestapo circles spread the story that Milch's mother had stated under oath that Milch was not a child of her marriage to a former quartermaster general in command of medical stores for the Imperial German Army. What is true is that Milch was

called upon to sign a declaration upon his word of honor that he knew of no non-Aryan blood, and this he did. It is equally important that further inquiries into his family tree were categorically forbidden by Goering himself.

Milch, who rose quickly to the rank of general, became better known to foreign countries during many visits which he paid to this country and to Italy and France.

With the conclusion of the Anti-Comintern Axis Pact, Milch, as Secretary of State of the Luftwaffe, was faced with two problems. One was to examine the strategical value of the Italian Regia Aeronautica, the second to satisfy the demands of the Imperial Japanese Army Air Force, which was far behind in the training of its personnel and in 1937 was certainly not up-to-date in its material. Frequent visits to Rome convinced Milch that the Italian Air Force, which had gained some reputation by its spectacular mass Atlantic crossings under Marshal Balbo, had since then run into a period of stagnation and at this time was of little use. In October 1936 Milch visited the airport of Mirafiore near Turin, took the salute at a parade of the 4th Air Brigade at Lorate Pozzolo, near Milan, and inspected the airplane factory at Sesto Calende. What he saw was not encouraging. The Italians lagged behind in design and material, and though a great number of pilots were trained and enlisted in the reserve formations, Milch was not at all convinced of their fighting value. Memoranda bearing Milch's signature, however, had no influence upon the final political outcome.

Again in May 1939 Milch conferred in Rome with General Valle, the Italian Under-Secretary for Air, and though the official report describes this meeting as one that was "to draw up terms for the reciprocal collaboration between the Italian and German Air forces and the intensification of collaboration in the military field," Milch was really there to reprimand the Italians for lagging behind in the program agreed upon two years before. The Italians feebly excused themselves with the plea that though they had sufficient pilots the production of machines had declined because they needed special steels for which they

could not pay. They also claimed that the Spanish Civil War had swallowed up too many machines. The official communiqué hid the fact that Milch was required to make the best of a bad job.

In Japan, the Far Eastern Axis partner, the problems were different. General Tomoyuki Yamashita commanded the Japanese Army Air Force. The German air attaché at the German Embassy in Tokyo, Von Gronau, had directed a steady flow of complaints which culminated in the conclusion that the Japanese had no effective air force worth mentioning. Of dive-bombing they knew nothing.

Milch sent his best friend, Udet, to Japan to go thoroughly into the Japanese flying resources, and on receiving Udet's report he sent out a German air mission, which was to organize Japan's air force and drill her pilots. Capable of facing anything and learning anything, then as now, the Japanese had not shown any innate genius for the air. Milch relied upon Von Gronau, the air attaché in Tokyo, to smooth out any difficulties and prevent friction, but German diplomacy was not enough to offset German methods and manners. The work of the German Air Mission nearly brought about a break in the cordial relations between Japan and Germany. On arrival in Japan the German Luftwaffe officers put the Japanese through the most vigorous training, not, of course, marked by much understanding of the men placed at their disposal. The average Japanese officer is as hardy as any, but now, it appears, he was not being so much trained in the most exacting performance of war, but ordered into exercise of dive-bombing and told to get out of it as best he could. The death rate of Japanese personnel under training by the German Air Mission was higher than that suffered by Japan in her air operations in China. Public opinion in Japan and even higher army officers became resentful, and the Germans were compelled to modify their methods. In the end Milch could report to Goering that satisfactory progress had been made. The war, which the Germans and Japanese already had in mind, was to prove it.

The Japanese surprise air attacks on Pearl Harbor, the dive-bombing in Malaya, the destruction of the British battleships off Singapore, were executed by pilots who had received their training indirectly from Milch through his air mission to Japan. Japan commanded a small but very skilled group of pilots who made the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor more deadly by their all-out air onslaught. These pilots formed the elite of the Japanese Officers' Corps; they had had the best training available in the Axis nations, and they were intended and expected to tip the scale decisively against the United States during the first few weeks. But the quality of these pilots was rare among Japanese air personnel, and the inferior capacity of the majority is among the causes of the surprising failure of the Japanese to exploit to the utmost their initial success. That incapacity was entirely a Japanese affair; none of the responsibility for it rested upon Milch and Gronau.

The growing confidence inside the German High Command was greatly strengthened by memoranda Milch was able to supply on the weakness of the effective French Air Force. Milch managed to get on rather cordial terms with the French chief of the Air Staff, General Joseph Vuillemin. He personally visited the French Air establishment, and nothing was hidden from his experienced eye. He saw, indeed, that from the first day of any operation against France the Luftwaffe could play cat-and-mouse with the French Air Force.

His valuation of the Royal Air Force was not quite so reassuring for the Secretary of State of the Luftwaffe. Milch had seen an air display in 1936 at Hatfield and was duly impressed by it. Next year, October 1937, Milch headed a deputation of the Luftwaffe which comprised his friend Udet, by that time quartermaster general of the Luftwaffe, Lieutenant General Stumpf, Lieutenant Colonel Polte, Major Nielsen, and Major Kreipe.

Returning to Berlin from that visit, Major Kreipe, who was the personal A.D.C. to Milch, related over a glass of beer to friends in the exclusive Aero Club the impressions which his chief had gained during his visit. Though the R.A.F. display

at Hendon was duly appreciated, a stronger impression upon the German was made by visits to aircraft factories at Birmingham and Coventry. According to Kreipe, Milch was not disposed to dismiss the potential strength of the R.A.F. in the same way as he did the French Air Force. Though he was confident that the immediate striking force of the R.A.F. would not be relatively high for the next two or three years, he warned his government against underestimation of the R.A.F. if production of aircraft and training of new crews were brought up to a real war footing.

This belief led later on to the Battle of Britain and the bombing, in 1940-41, of England. For Milch conceived the only remedy against the efficient R.A.F. to be what is known in German army circles as a "suffocation attack." This entailed the silent admission that if the R.A.F. were able to take to the air in full strength with expanded personnel and reinforced craft, the Luftwaffe would stand a doubtful chance of winning a decisive victory. Therefore such a development had to be prevented by "suffocating" the R.A.F., which meant a prolonged bombardment of the places of production before these factories could turn out the aircraft. His 1937 visit to this country, combined with the reports of the German air attaché in London, General Wenninger, laid the fundamental basis for the German onslaught after the fall of France.

The outbreak of this war saw a great deal of Luftwaffe work in the Polish campaign, but ground operations dominated the field. The only novelty invented by Milch during the air operations against Poland was that he attached to commanding officers of air squadrons members of the German minority in Poland, who were used as pathfinders for targets. The Polish Air Force was not up-to-date in material, but when the full story of Poland's part in this war is written it will become clear that every Polish pilot could have claimed a much higher standard of morale than any Luftwaffe officer, whose chief source of confidence was that he was a member of a force that hopelessly outnumbered that of the Poles.

The attack on Denmark and Norway was executed according to plans with which neither Milch nor any other Luftwaffe officer had anything to do. These plans were originally laid down in 1925-26 and had been drawn up by officers of the German Navy. In 1940 the basis of these plans still stood, though their tactical execution was facilitated by the Luftwaffe's enormous resources in transport planes. The long peacetime preparation which Milch had directed as the managing director of the Lufthansa now had its effect. The Junkers 52 which gave the Norwegian campaign its design was originally a commercial plane for cargo and passengers. Milch, although only the technical executant, took full credit for the successful campaign in the north, and there was nobody to oppose him, certainly not German naval officers who had been working on the original Norwegian plans in 1924. The part of the German Navy in the Norwegian campaign is well known. Their losses were heavy, and especially those which they received in encounters with Norwegian defenses either by sea action or by land action. What loss the German Navy took into account beforehand they must have expected from the interference of the British Navy. As it happened, the small Norwegian forces caused most of the sinkings.

In the campaign in the west, which went according to plan, Milch's role was not a conspicuous one. By the nature of the fighting the Luftwaffe was given no independence whatsoever, but had to act under strict orders from the Army. Nevertheless the rank of field marshal was awarded to him, a promotion somewhat discounted by its award to two important Luftwaffe generals, Sperrle and Kesselring, at the same time, though their previous rank was inferior to that of Milch. That was an irritation, but there was a more serious check than this upon the high reputation that Milch was able to build up after Norway. There was an adverse influence in which, though obscurely, could be seen the hand of Hitler, who, like Mussolini and other dictators, has always jealously watched the rise of men under his command, playing one off against the other where a check

seemed expedient. Hitler was fully aware that Goering was little more than a puppet in the larger organization of the air force, and that the brain behind it was Milch's. He knew that to keep that organization effective he needed Milch. But there is a difference between making use of a man and allowing him to become a popular hero. This self-regarding jealousy has inspired Hitler whenever he has intervened in any branch of the German armed forces. Milch experienced it after the fall of France, and worse was to follow.

To the Secretary of State of the German Luftwaffe the campaign against England that followed the fall of France had to be conducted—at least as far as fundamental strategical rules went—on similar lines to that against Norway, with one important difference. Against Britain he could not depend at all on the German Navy, which had no desire to commit suicide in an engagement with the British Navy. The full weight of operations fell therefore upon the shoulders of the Luftwaffe, which was fighting on lines that were actually extremely simple. How they tried to win that fight has been described in the official government publication *The Battle of Britain*.

If Milch was charged with any of the responsibility for the defeat of the Luftwaffe in the Battle of Britain, he had a sound reply. Hitler had demanded numbers, and Milch had found ways of supplying them swiftly, ingeniously, and in the beginning secretly. He could hardly be blamed if the German machines lacked maneuverability, armament, speed, and fire power. The speed demanded in the supply of machines prevented that deliberation in the search for the best which produced the Spitfire. The best fighter in the world was designed with awareness of what the Stuka (Junkers 87) and the Messerschmitt lacked. The mass with which he had supplied Germany served her well in her simple and brutal scheme. Surprised and almost defenseless victims had been terrorized and subdued. Where there was little or no air force, Germany's had been irresistible, but before the all-out attack on Great Britain the Luftwaffe had never known an air battle on anything approaching equal terms.

In the Battle of Britain, which was the necessary preliminary to invasion, Hitler and Goering, above Milch, calculated on the effect of numbers, but the Luftwaffe failed, in spite of overwhelming numbers—roughly about two to one—mustered with the aggressor's foreknowledge, because the nerves of Germany's leaders failed before the daily mounting total of losses. They were even doubtful, perhaps, whether their opponents could really be so few. And Germany's losses were so heavy because her pilots were, so to speak, beaten on the draw by singlehearted airmen whose spirit could hardly be equaled by whatever fanatical fighting qualities, brought to its pitch under the eyes of the Gestapo, were to be found among German pilots; above all, because they were outflown, outmaneuvered, and outgunned by the British machines, whose surpassing qualities Milch and his designers had not conceived and had not been given the time to develop. The Battle of Britain, it should be remembered, lasted longer than any of the previous campaigns in which the Luftwaffe had fought as an independent unit. In Poland, the Low Countries, and France it assisted the Army in its ground operations and was completely under the command of the Army.

It is too early yet to say that the strategical failure of the Luftwaffe in the Battle of Britain determined Hitler to turn against Russia; probably political considerations had a much greater influence on him. It is beyond doubt, however, that the Luftwaffe's failure to achieve what was assigned to it had its effect in the sudden direction of the German war effort toward the east. It would have been easy for the supreme commander and Führer of the German people to get rid of the Secretary of State for Air after the failure against Britain had not the possible scapegoat foreseen danger.

While Dr. Goebbels was trumpeting ceaseless victories over the British Isles, Milch was careful to put into the limelight two conspicuous leaders of the Luftwaffe, himself keeping well behind the scenes. They were Albert Kesselring and Hugo Sperrle. Both officers had been active members of the Reichswehr, from which they had been transferred to the young Luftwaffe. It

was especially for Field Marshal Sperrle, who was under his operational command, that the cunning Milch managed to prepare the discredit.

Since 1926 Sperrle, as a major in the Reichswehr Ministry, had been experimenting with the high-flying subject of stopping combustion engines by "death rays." Many other people had the same ideas, and usually their experiments cost a lot of money and resulted in a scientific humbug, after which the inventor usually went bankrupt if he did not come into conflict with the law. Major Sperrle achieved practical results. He constructed a machine from which electromagnetic rays were emitted that stopped combustion engines at a distance of twenty yards, though beyond that range the rays were ineffective. This side line of Sperrle's studies had long been forgotten. Milch took this opportunity of spreading the belief that Sperrle had once had a hand in experiments, which in themselves had been discredited on scientific grounds, while their authors had been associated with fraud.

History recalls that as Milch managed to shift the responsibility to these people, who included the commander in chief of the Luftwaffe, the powerful Goering himself, he was allowed to keep his post and his friends theirs.

The Russian campaign meant for many generals of the German Army an abrupt end to their careers; sometimes they came back to office at home, and sometimes they were given the bowler hat for good. For generals of the Luftwaffe it was not so, and there is a good reason for this. In the German General Staff, opinion in regard to the strength of the Russian ground forces was divided. The more technically instructed officers of the German Army had a high respect for the Russian armed forces; the less technical officers thought in conservative terms and hugged the conviction that their large grasp of the art of war would be the decisive factor. This conservative section of the German Army was naturally also unable to estimate a factor that was of the most intangible character, and one they had never seen tested—namely, the ability of the Russian General

Staff to direct a national war of defense. But the Russian General Staff turned out to be as well trained as the German if not better.

As far as air war was concerned the question was a much simpler one. Here, from the beginning, Milch stood on solid ground. There was no doubt about what could be expected from the Red air force. The air arm in Russia was first class, the pilots were of the highest standard, and the material had been tested in peacetime and proved to be of the best. The numerical strength was enormous, and the greater part of the industry producing warcraft was out of the bombing range of any German aircraft. Throughout the Russian campaign there has never been the necessity for Milch to revert to the excuse "I told you so," which became familiar among certain German army leaders. From the beginning, decision in the east was to be sought by the Germans on the ground by quick destruction of the Russian field armies. The Luftwaffe was expected to play an important part in it, but not a decisive one. While the Army claimed victory after victory early in 1941, the Luftwaffe could not let its case go by default, and on more than one occasion it was claimed that the entire Red air force had been destroyed. It is not known who was responsible for these announcements, but it certainly cannot have been Milch, for they were errors that were quickly exposed, and called for scapegoats, whom Hitler did not fail to find. And Milch still kept his office.

The part which the Luftwaffe played in North Africa has not been a very glorious one. They were effective enough as long as they outnumbered us, but as soon as a certain parity was established British superiority in material and fighting skill became very conspicuous. Here Field Marshal Kesselring, being in the field, took the direct responsibility. Anybody aware of the secret animosity between Milch and Kesselring would be certain of the secret satisfaction with which Milch saw the former Reichswehr officer receive his hiding. Kesselring had never spared the diplomat Milch his rough manners, and it was Kesselring who started Milch's nickname of "Baby Face," which sug-

gests only too well the appearance of the plump, blue-eyed Under-Secretary of State for Air.

Though there has been a marked decrease in the responsibilities and activities of Milch as the brains of the Luftwaffe, he is bound to have thrown upon him an important part in the defensive tasks that now confront German air power. He has shown that he is able to execute operations of limited offensive character. He has also shown where his limits lie. The decrease of German land power caused by the fighting in the east does not leave an unlimited reserve for the defense of the 15,000-mile coast of the fortress of Europe. The land commanders charged with warding off Allied blows in the future against that fortress will have to call increasingly upon the Luftwaffe. The combination army-air force worked well in France, but the opponents during that campaign, in which the Luftwaffe, independently trained and organized, was under the absolute control of the Army, cannot be compared in any respect with what the German armed forces will have to face in the future. It is useful to know the qualifications and the limitations of a man who has been at the center of Hitler's air power since its stealthy creation.

Field Marshal Walther Heinrich Alfred Herman von Brauchitsch

I organize before I fight. Von Brauchitsch.

Walther von Brauchitsch was in figure and appearance the beau ideal of the professional soldier: lithe, wiry, upright, quick and direct in speech and action. In his face the severity of a Napoleonic nose and firmly set lips were softened, and not deceptively, by expressive brown eyes. He instilled an atmosphere of confidence and sincerity not general among his colleagues. In his dealings with subordinates he showed understanding and verged on pleasantness, which is so rare that it might almost be the subject of a taboo among senior Prussian officers. His bearing in the presence of civilians was marked by perfect manners and pleasant ways.

It was inconceivable that this man, except under the greatest provocation, would lose his balanced temper, and on the fateful occasion when, as will be related, he threw away restraint while with Hitler and his council, he must have been moved by his sense of danger to the Army and the nation arising from the Führer's orders.

Not an extremist and not a showman, he did not make such claims to deference as sometimes make the company of those of high rank difficult for self-respecting men. Men under his command who had proved themselves received due credit. Service under him was possibly preferred to that of any other in the

German Army. His word could be relied on, and he would always accept responsibility for his own actions and decisions.

The same elasticity of mind that made bad manners unnatural to him would help to give him his facility in foreign languages, as well as the wide range of his education and information. His interest in technical questions and in broader aspects of sociology, economics, and philosophy might have made him a great civil administrator, as they certainly taught him how to deal with the diverse characters of other general officers. Knowing that "reason does not need to raise its voice," he made his wishes and his proper authority respected without bullying. For all this, no one should think of him as the oily diplomat; he detested that role and was himself too sincere to assume it.

In Von Brauchitsch there was a man of fine nature who could be dissociated from the soldier. He could shake hands with a visitor without clicking his heels, and allow one to come into close mental contact, for his sympathetic and informed imagination ranged beyond the Army and its separate life. The pretty custom of having flowers presented by children to the principal personage at a public ceremony was charged with its original grace and meaning when Von Brauchitsch had part in it.

He was, in fact, a type of German who would present a helpful and hopeful example in the re-education of the German people after this world conflict, though the type is now rare enough to be conspicuous when it is seen. It was characteristic of him that in any disaster calling for remedial action on the part of the civilian authorities in a district under his military authority he would himself take the first step, even at financial risk to himself. When commander in chief in East Prussia, he would be one of the first on the spot when country villages were devastated by fires, talking to the people, promising them help from the Army, inquiring into their immediate needs, all with an ease and grace that left no question of his sincerity or evoked the all too common suggestion, when a commanding general showed sympathy with the civilian public, that he was courting publicity.



From Black Star

FIELD MARSHAL WALTHER HEINRICH ALFRED HERMAN VON BRAUCHITSCH, a general of great ability, who was in command of the German armies until the end of the first Russian campaign.

As commander in chief he took a wide view of military necessities and of reasons of state. Convinced that Greater Germany was destined to dominate the world, he could not have been tender in his methods, but there is no reason to taint him with Nazi crimes, especially in the treatment of subject peoples. On grounds of permanent success alone he would have differed from Hitler and his gangsters in their methods of asserting mastery, and he must have repudiated the characteristic brutality in disposing of those who stood in their way. Yet as a militarist he had his illusions, which led him alternately to think he was using the Nazis for his own designs and then to become the instrument of lawless schemes no man of his antecedents would have acknowledged. At times either his judgment or his integrity was clouded. Recall his address to German soldiers in France after Dunkirk: "We consider the victory already won," he said. England, he admitted, remained secure, "but only so long as we choose." If he believed that, he was unable to grasp all the factors of the situation on land and sea and in the air; if he did not believe it, he was lending himself to Hitler's theory that his grandiose purposes would be served by fooling the Army and the public.

Walther von Brauchitsch was born on October 4, 1881, in Berlin, a son of the Prussian general of cavalry, Bernhard von Brauchitsch, and Charlotte von Gordon. The family of Von Brauchitsch, which originally came from Silesia, moved in the leading social circles of Berlin, and the father's military rank put him on equal footing with any general commanding the guards or the Imperial Life Bodyguard. To a great extent Von Brauchitsch, Sr., belonged to the rare minority of his caste who have earned themselves the attribute of "enlightenment," which meant that he had on occasions broken out of the self-centered social and professional limitations which usually encased families like his own. He was greatly interested in the political movements that pursued liberal and moderate conservative aims, re-

sponded to the fine arts, and could be seen at every exhibition of painting and sculpture in Berlin during the late eighties.

It was this rather unusual breadth of mind that influenced the general of cavalry to send his son Walther to a Berlin grammar school (*Französisches Gymnasium*), and not immediately to the cadet schools. It was not until 1895 that Walther joined the cadet schools near Berlin, which he left as one of their best pupils in 1900. The same year he became a second lieutenant in the Royal Prussian Grenadier Guards No. 3, also known as "*Königin Elizabeth*," probably the best guards regiment in Germany, famous as the "*Elizabether*."

With Von Brauchitsch's origins his future military career could be regarded as limited only by his capacity. He could be expected to remain in the guards until he reached field rank, when many ways would be open to him to join either the Imperial Court in Berlin, as an A.D.C. to the emperor, or to accept other higher positions inside the Army that were reserved for officers of such a regiment. The "*Elizabether*" Regiment was the ideal starting point for a young officer.

But Walther von Brauchitsch began to reveal his character. Not for him the secure and conventional road; he intended to climb higher, and he chose the steeper path. A year after joining the "*Elizabether*" he asked for a transfer to an artillery regiment, preferably a regiment of the line. None of the men around him would understand him, especially not another young second lieutenant, Von Kleist, who was to fight thirty-nine years later in Rostov-on-Don against Marshal Timoshenko and to lose; for Von Kleist took all the assurance of a former "*Elizabether*" officer into a situation where only such knowledge and skill as Von Brauchitsch was now winning could have availed him. It was Von Kleist who led a complete "*Elizabether*" party against Lieutenant von Brauchitsch that tried to persuade him to alter his plans. In his request for a transfer this group could see only the outbreak of a "palace rebellion," and the beginning of the end of the social constitution of Berlin's upper ten thousand. Von Brauchitsch had made it plain that in his opinion the technical

developments of the new century would demand radical changes in the Army. He was convinced that the machine age would force the Army sooner or later to make a complete about-turn.

In 1901 he joined the 3rd Guards Field Artillery Regiment. He was soon made A.D.C. to a battalion commander, and later to the regimental staff. This particular regiment, however, was too conscious of their standing as guards to get the utmost from their artillery performances, showing thus some of the tinsel quality for which Von Brauchitsch had left his grenadiers.

In 1912 he transferred to the Great General Staff in Berlin as a first lieutenant, where after a year's service he was made a captain. Again, in March 1914, he transferred to an operational department of the General Staff, and at the outbreak of the war in August 1914 he proceeded as a General Staff officer to the staff of the XVI Army Corps at Metz.

With the staff of this army corps he saw the heavy fighting that developed west of Metz against the French Third Army. After fighting through Luxembourg and against Longwy, the XVI German Army Corps was the first to take up positions against the French in the sector of Verdun. During the early months of 1914 this French position represented the hinge of the entire French field forces, and the German position north and northwest of Verdun stood for the corresponding position with the German field forces.

At this time Von Brauchitsch first experienced a military phenomenon that could not have been foreseen by any responsible military leader. The German field armies were massing in August 1914 for their assault against Belgium and northern France. The XVI Army Corps deployed from the fortress region of Metz against Luxembourg; the plan was perfect, and any interference in its execution could only lead to disastrous results. Suddenly the supreme commander, Kaiser Wilhelm II, in his general headquarters at Bad Kreuznach, ordered a division to be withdrawn for the special protection of his headquarters. The Kaiser gave directions that the division was to be taken from the hinge positions covering Metz and linking the 5th Ger-

man Army with the 6th German Army. Such a move might have had disastrous results for the Germans, who were about to start their offensive. If the French should recognize this incredible move in time they could concentrate against the German hinge and split the entire German forces in two by a determined push over Metz to Saarbrücken. Von Brauchitsch was present when these orders, signed by the supreme commander, arrived at the headquarters. It was the edge of disaster. For forty-eight hours the situation was unclear, then the frantic efforts of the chief of the German General Staff, Helmuth von Moltke, Jr., succeeded in cancelling the intentions of the Kaiser. Here Von Brauchitsch saw from close quarters how disastrous the interference of any civilian in large-scale operations could be. He frequently referred to it later as an example of what should not be permitted, and it made a lasting impression upon his military outlook.

Von Brauchitsch was on the staff of the XVI Army Corps in front of Verdun when the German Verdun offensive started. The fighting round Verdun made heavy demands upon artillery, and Von Brauchitsch was able to train himself in the use of artillery in such strength as is allotted to a corps, for during that offensive he very often controlled movements of artillery masses up to the strength of eight or nine corps. He was, in fact, the specialist of the corps who had held the positions in front of Verdun since 1914, and knew the country better than any other German officer. More valuable than the technical training given by Verdun was the experience, supremely valuable to a mind that could analyze it, of a colossal failure. He recognized by firsthand experience much of what made Falkenhayn's "*Brennofen*" futile.

The German plan had provided that with continuous German attacks without the gaining of ground or positions, the French would be forced to send division after division into a blast furnace in which they would be consumed until the whole French Army had been so reduced that it could no longer put up any fighting. Falkenhayn had calculated that time would be on his

side and that the initiative would never be wrested from him. Von Brauchitsch noted that as the weeks and months of carnage passed it was the Allies who, in spite of severe strain, had the advantage of time and, with their offensive on the Somme, were able to wrest the initiative from the Germans. Whoever heard Von Brauchitsch lecture on these subjects was struck by his memory for even the smallest detail of what had happened during Verdun, and by the way in which he usually led his facts and argument up to a demand for offensives to be executed in the shortest time.

Toward the end of the war he was transferred as first General Staff officer to the staff of the Guard Reserve Corps, one of the last corps to retreat to Germany, where it arrived in complete order.

For Von Brauchitsch service was not interrupted. Already, in November 1919, after the main task of the demobilization of the Guard Reserve Corps had been finished, he was appointed General Staff officer on the staff of Army District II in Stettin. Here he fulfilled General Staff duties without being able to use his knowledge of artillery, a position in which no such active-minded officer could be content. A year later he received his appointment to the staff of the 2nd Artillery Regiment 2, and in 1921 he was appointed chief of the second battery of the 2nd Artillery Regiment 2. In 1922 he was transferred to the Reichswehr Ministry, where as a major he worked as assistant in the Department for Artillery.

The problems that now confronted Von Brauchitsch were based largely on the reorganization of nucleus formations for artillery, and on the realization of lessons to be learned from the closing experiences of the war. It was given to Von Brauchitsch to take a large part in putting these lessons into practice. They fell into two important sections: one, concerning the future position of artillery formations; second, the types of gun to be used in these new organizations. One of the first alterations was to scrap the classification of "light artillery," "medium artillery," and "heavy artillery." A certain decentralization of

artillery forces took place, and the infantry divisions were given an amount of artillery exceeding even the strength of the normal divisional artillery of the war of 1914-18. The heavier artillery, which used to be known during and before the last war as "corps artillery," became now "reinforcement artillery."

During Von Brauchitsch's time in the Reichswehr Ministry this reorganization was executed mainly by bringing that artillery primarily under the orders of the infantry-division commander, the leading conception being that close collaboration between infantry and artillery could be guaranteed only if the latter were incorporated to the highest degree in the structure of the formations of the first. Von Brauchitsch was not in a position to do much in reorganization of gun material or in its improvement; that had to be reserved for a later date.

In this position he spent three long years. He was promoted to lieutenant colonel in April 1925, and during the same year, in December, he had again to take up a troop command, as is usual for General Staff officers after a long term of service in Berlin, and he took over command of the 2nd Battalion of the 6th Artillery Regiment. In November 1927 he was appointed chief of staff of the 6th Division in Münster, in Westphalia, one of the strongest garrisons in western Germany. In 1928 he was made a colonel, and in 1930, after these many years of experience with troops under peacetime conditions, he returned to the Reichswehr Ministry, where he took over the department for "Army Education." Behind that term was hidden the department of "Army Expansion."

Now the time had come for Von Brauchitsch to go deeper into the question of guns and munitions, which he had had to leave in an indefinite form when in the same office as an assistant. As chief of his old department he ordered radical alterations. Preparations were made to assign to each infantry division two artillery regiments, the first composed of nine batteries. Four batteries had 7.5 field guns, two 10.5-cm. howitzers, and three 15-cm. howitzers. The 2nd Artillery Regiment was also composed of nine batteries, but with guns of much heavier caliber:

three batteries of 10.5-cm. howitzers, four of 15-cm. howitzers, two of 21-cm. mortars.

At the same time foundations were laid for the introduction of a new gun, the 88-mm. gun, which was conspicuous because of its long barrel. In this Von Brauchitsch took particular interest. The 88-mm. gun was originally thought of as a handy piece for counterbattery work. During Von Brauchitsch's time in the Reichswehr Ministry in 1930 it was adjusted to the purpose of a fairly heavy anti-aircraft gun, easy to handle and completely mechanized. As was shown under field conditions in World War II, this gun was so effective that it became a dual-purpose gun against both aircraft and tanks. Its introduction in the new form was one of the main achievements of Von Brauchitsch.

Von Brauchitsch, as head of this department of army expansion, did not follow the usual line of his brother officers in breaking completely with existing rules and regulations and with the limitations laid down by the Treaty of Versailles. If in his departmental work he encountered legal obstacles, he overrode them only upon the written orders of his superiors. Von Brauchitsch was accused by both friends and foes inside the Reichswehr Ministry of having a "legality complex," for violation of agreements accepted by the German Government and its military advisers was against his personal conception of honor. Von Brauchitsch knew that in this he was almost alone and that none of his friends was hampered by equal scruples. The words "secret" and "under cover" were devices that were excluded by his personal code.

Von Brauchitsch did his duty, and he did it well, but he would not make his task easier by tricks that he could not defend as an officer and a man of integrity. Even now, when he was in danger of impinging on the new order of leadership which knew no laws that interfered with its aims, promotion continued. We find him a major general in 1931 and inspector of artillery in 1932. The political events of that fateful year in Germany left him cold, and while almost every officer inside the Reichswehr Ministry was standing by to receive orders to overthrow

the legal constitution of the German Republic and to kick out of office the legitimate government in Prussia with its ministers in Berlin, Von Brauchitsch confined himself to his soldierly purpose. There was more than the so-called "legality complex" to distinguish him, more than the pride of an officer of a passing order. In his spare time he had attended many lectures at Berlin University, and with professors and students he had discussed questions of social and economic interest. He did not live severely limited by the military outlook, as many of his colleagues did.

For example, he was fully acquainted with the conditions leading up to the world economic slump that started in Wall Street in 1929 and was in full swing in central Europe in 1930. The rise in votes for the Communist party in Germany was no mystery to him, and though it would be going too far to say that he sympathized with the broad masses of the workers, he was conscious of conditions among the working classes of his country that had led naturally to general discontent. When the representatives of the firm which issues the German *Who's Who* asked him for his special hobbies, he gave, to the surprise of his brother officers, "Economic and political questions of the day."

Walther von Brauchitsch was too much the professional soldier to have formulated for himself a scheme of things that would fit into any political party, but one thing was certain—he did not believe in the doctrine of his Junker class. So thorough had his studies been that he could surprise his subordinate staff officers with a lecture that showed profound knowledge of the Manchester Liberal School or the leading ideas governing the so-called German Historical School. When he rejected during these years the party principles of the National Socialist party, he did so not from fear of the "neo-socialism" that was the main attraction for the workers in Hitler's vague ideals. He was sociologist enough to recognize and to explain that none of the many promises of that party could be fulfilled because each one contradicted the other.

Von Brauchitsch is here the perfect contrast to another gen-

eral of the Reichswehr, Kurt von Schleicher, who boasted of being the "Socialist General." While Von Schleicher was nothing but a wirepuller and a man who used the slogans of the time for his own ends without being a sincere advocate of betterment and improvement, Von Brauchitsch, though in fact he sought no political position or desired any popular following, could have embarked on the political field with sincerity and an instructed mind. He was the better soldier for standing well outside politics, and his quality was recognized, for in February 1933 he became commander in chief in the First Military District in East Prussia and chief of the 1st Division in Königsberg, and in October 1933 he was promoted to lieutenant general.

In East Prussia an officer of this rank and command could not altogether avoid internal or external political controversy had he wished, less so because under the national tradition every issue had finally to be decided by the stronger personal authority. His first clash was with the local Gauleiter of the party and head of the civil administration of the province of East Prussia. Koch was an individual of dubious qualifications. He was one of the gangster types, who would meet political opponents with violence, and was more likely to be the cause of trouble because of the unaccustomed power now given to such men by the central government in Berlin. Charges of defalcation were made more than once against Herr Koch, who, at any rate, had no reputation for political integrity and no social standing. The commander in chief of the East Prussian military district would certainly not receive such a man privately, whatever contacts were inevitable on official occasions. But Koch, conscious of his checkered personal record, never complained to the central government in Berlin. He knew that he could not withstand inquiry. Another incident was necessary to draw the attention of the Reichs Government in Berlin to the attitude of the military chief.

Von Brauchitsch was engaged in constructing field fortifications near the Masurian Lakes in East Prussia and, for this purpose, declared certain areas prohibited for civilians. The Black

Guard command in Berlin had the sinister notion that special maneuvers of their SS formations might assist the East Prussian population in their morale and impress the domineering Junker caste which in that province, up to 1934-35, was still in a strong position. Reichs Führer of the SS, Himmler, was not well informed about Von Brauchitsch's political views and classed him with the Junkers.

It came to Von Brauchitsch's knowledge that these SS maneuvers were to be combined with a campaign of persecution against the Jews in East Prussia and a particularly severe campaign against both the Protestant and Catholic churches in this district, where strong religious feelings were still retained. The general countered this move on the military field.

When the SS arrived in East Prussia they intended to detain in the special military areas. On their arrival they were received by formations of the Reichswehr, who were under strict orders to prevent at any cost any storm trooper from setting foot on the soil on the shores of the Masurian Lakes. The SS had to return to the Reich, but Himmler launched a sharp protest, and the entire matter came up for arbitration by Hitler. Von Brauchitsch stood upon his duty and made the laconic defense: "Civilians are not allowed to enter that area." Nor would he enter into any discussion of that order. He did not acknowledge the military status of the SS formations. In this his attitude in 1935, and on similar occasions in subsequent years, was militarily correct and unassailable on political grounds. He acted as a soldier, but, unlike his military colleagues in Berlin, he accepted also his limitations as such. He was not interested in the ambitious plans of the commander in chief, General Baron von Fritsch, though he was fully aware of them. His duties as commander in chief of Germany's easternmost province filled his time, especially as he was now called upon to make a special survey of the armed forces of the Soviet Union, a task which he took up with unusual energy. We shall return to the results of his study when dealing with the position he took up shortly before the German attack on Russia in 1941.

The dismissal of Werner von Fritsch as commander in chief of the German Armed Forces in 1938 was a severe test of the stability of the German internal administration of that time. By that act Hitler achieved a major victory over the Reichswehr caste, and for that very reason the appointment as the new head of the Army of so uncompromising a soldier as Von Brauchitsch was a complete surprise. Given Hitler's policy of displacing the supreme authority of the Army in its own sphere, it seemed unaccountable. It can only be explained by Hitler's caution. He still moved by apparent compromise. Von Fritsch represented the class that was possibly the most dangerous competitor in Hitler's struggle for personal world domination by means of the power of the Reich and the efficiency of the German Armed Forces. Von Brauchitsch was certainly not elevated as a Nazi sympathizer; indeed, some informed observers among German army circles in 1938 expected him to inspire an even stronger anti-Nazi attitude in the German High Command than had prevailed under Von Fritsch. Such expectations took too little account of Von Brauchitsch's sense of discipline.

The appointment of this man as commander in chief took place in dramatic circumstances. Called upon to give his opinion in the Reich's Chancellery on the events of February 1938, he was reported to have explained to the supreme commander, Adolf Hitler, that the influence of civilians in military affairs inevitably leads to disastrous results. He agreed that it was not the task of the commander in chief to dabble in internal politics, but his first point was put before Hitler in an unmistakable and impressive way. Von Brauchitsch, it is known, is the only German general who has ever been able to tell Hitler in the presence of other persons that the days when a lance corporal could assume the position of a Napoleon were over. And that he did in no uncertain terms. His appointment in February 1938 and his uncompromising insistence on his military responsibility account for the fact that, despite his known assumption of intuition wisdom, Hitler did not interfere with military operations during the Polish, Norwegian, French, or Balkan campaigns.

It was significant, again, that the new commander in chief retained the personal staff and the adjutants of his predecessor, which, after the sharp conflict between Hitler and Von Fritsch, impossible to conceal, was proof of strength. Only a few days later, in the presence of other officers, he rebuked a man who was gaining importance in the Reichswehr disproportionate to his professional abilities—General Wilhelm Keitel. Keitel by this time held the important position of military Under-Secretary of State with a general's rank. But Von Brauchitsch did not conceal his contempt for men who, like Keitel, obtained their positions by intrigue, and the relations between the two men were not happy.

In all this the attitude of Hitler is understandable. A war was pending; operations might start any moment. The alternatives to Von Brauchitsch were two men who were both politically "black sheep," Von Leeb and Von Rundstedt, whose collusion with Von Fritsch had led to their temporary retirement in February 1938. General von Bock, who might have been among the "possibles," hardly possessed the necessary qualifications. General Keitel had no claim to consideration.

In internal organization General von Brauchitsch distinguished himself by two orders, which he issued as soon as he took up his new position. He laid down hard-and-fast rules about the feeding of the German soldier, and the schedule which he had drawn up after having investigated the question from every point of view and consulted the opinion of more than two thousand scientists was this:

Breakfast

½ pound pure rye bread
coffee mixture or tea
1 ounce butter or margarine or ¼ pound marmalade

Dinner

½ pound bread
½ pint soup
6 ounces boneless meat or 12 ounces fish fillet

- ½ ounce fat (lard or butter)
- 2 pounds potatoes and seasonable vegetables

Supper

- ½ pound bread
- ½ pint coffee
- 1 ounce sugar
- 1¼ ounce butter or margarine
- 9 ounces fresh sausage

Once a week potatoes to be served in their jackets, light beer to be ration issue on field maneuvers and on strenuous duties, cigarettes ration issue also.

This schedule was accompanied by another order introducing solitary confinement and darkened cells again as a punishment. At the same time Von Brauchitsch reminded his commanders of the standing orders that in certain emergencies a soldier was entitled to use arms against civilians in Germany. Arms might be so used:

1. To ward off an attack or threat with direct danger to life and limb or to break down opposition.
2. To compel obedience to the order to give up arms, or, in the case of assemblies of people, an order to disperse.
3. Against prisoners or persons temporarily arrested who try to escape.
4. To stop persons who try to escape after a cry of "Halt."
5. To protect persons or things placed under their guard after a "halt" warning. Hand grenades or dynamite may be used in a case of absolute necessity, but firearms are not to be used when other weapons will serve.

This stern reminder did not pass without comment, especially among the party people in higher positions, for nobody knew exactly what the commander in chief's purpose was.

A scheme of army welfare was perfected according to which N.C.O.s who had served for twelve years or more could apply for special jobs in the state service (post office, customs, etc.) or, if they declined such a position, could receive the equivalent

of £760 in cash to open a business of their own, but if they preferred to go as farmers to the border districts of Germany they were to receive the equivalent of £1,350 in cash to buy land and farming implements; in the latter case special credits would be arranged for them by state organizations. The perfection of this social scheme was one of the things that had matured in Von Brauchitsch's mind while studying social conditions many years before. He came now to practical results. A further illustration of his solicitude for the comfort and content of the troops was an order for six thousand pianos for the entertainment of the troops, the first of which was installed in the Führer's headquarters train.

These innovations and social improvements, though they were accompanied also by a more severe tightening on the disciplinary side of army life, were not welcomed by certain government quarters where it was considered that welfare and care ought to be reserved for certain institutions of the Nazi party, and the first to give this view expression was Dr. Goebbels, the Propaganda Minister. It was impossible to attack Von Brauchitsch on this ground, but Goebbels instituted a whispering campaign against the commander in chief. It was known that Von Brauchitsch had had differences in his family life and that a divorce from Frau von Brauchitsch was taking place. Immediately after the divorce Walther von Brauchitsch paid his addresses to Frau Charlotte Schmidt in Bad Salzbrunn in Silesia, the daughter of a retired high court judge, Herr Rueffer. These domestic events were regarded by Dr. Goebbels as a suitable background for slander. He put out stories that Von Brauchitsch had been able to take divorce proceedings only because Hitler had backed him, and that certain funds at the disposal of the Führer had been used in this connection. Dr. Goebbels was not very successful in this campaign, for at an early date Von Brauchitsch was able to trace the source of the rumors. The result was that the Reichs Minister for Propaganda and Public Enlightenment was summoned to the commander in chief's office, where on a sunny summer afternoon the frightened little

doctor received a lecture upon proceedings governing a duel between an officer and an academician. Whatever else he is, Dr. Goebbels is no hero, and the interview sufficed to stop the rumor within twenty-four hours.

Goebbels now passed the ball to the Reichs Youth Leader, Baldur von Schirach, who preferred the indirect attack. On his estate in Bavaria, Baldur von Schirach was the neighbor of two nephews of Von Brauchitsch—Manfred von Brauchitsch, the racing ace, and his brother Harald. A gamekeeper in the service of Von Schirach was said one day to have denounced these two brothers for slandering Frau von Schirach, who, indeed, was not to be compared with "Caesar's Wife." When on the local railway station next day the two brothers Von Brauchitsch met Baldur von Schirach, he slapped Manfred's face. Manfred asked for a duel, but Von Schirach answered that he was not a good shot. Manfred seemed satisfied.

A few days later—we are still in the summer of 1938—there was another scene. The two brothers lived with their mother in a flat, which was forced at night by Von Schirach and twelve men of his bodyguard. Without explanation they demolished the flat, locked up the mother in a cupboard, while Manfred and Harald, held helpless by the bodyguards, were beaten by Von Schirach with a riding whip.

Manfred and Harald, remembering Von Schirach's excuse for not accepting a duel, now resorted to law and sued him for damages. In the law court the defendant put forward the objection that he was a Reichstag deputy, and as such could not be sued in open court, but by pressing the charge the two brothers obtained damages, which Von Schirach paid.

See how these Nazis work. In all this neither Manfred nor Harald nor their mother was the real quarry of the Nazi party. Their larger aim was to compromise the commander in chief, who was also head of the Von Brauchitsch family. They failed. Von Brauchitsch married Frau Charlotte Schmidt on September 24, 1938, in Bad Salzbrunn, allowing himself six hours' leave for the wedding ceremony and then returning to the autumn ma-

neuveurs of the German Army. The commander in chief had reason to be at his post. While the lesser Nazi gangsters were extending their party control by intrigue and violence, the arch intriguer brought about the next coup in his vast plan, not yet checked, of international crime. Czechoslovakia was the victim.

The occupation of the Czechoslovak State was executed under a plan with which Von Brauchitsch had little to do. He is known to have given Hitler this warning: "If you want the German Army for bluff in this undertaking you can have it. For anything more serious we are not yet prepared." (With the significance of that warning in mind, it may well be asked again whether appeasement was really necessary for reasons of prudence.)

It is noticeable that during the subsequent administration of Czechoslovakia by the German Government, Von Brauchitsch endeavored, though ineffectively, to give meaning to the word protectorate. He was interested in the country as a basin for production, and such a plan could be only obstructed, not assisted, by the gangster methods of the Gestapo and the party, who were allowed a free hand under the "protector" Baron Konstantin von Neurath. Here the commander in chief's military correctness, whether it is regarded as meritorious or not, was his limitation. For the head of the Army was in essentials the instrument of Hitler.

At the end of January 1939 Von Brauchitsch was confronted with a question that had already helped to bring down Von Fritsch. Hitler had ordered the complete abolition of compulsory church service in the German Army. He also dispensed with the religious service on the occasion of the swearing in of young recruits. This order was issued by Hitler as supreme commander, without consulting the commander in chief. Though Von Brauchitsch was more concerned about the affront to his personal authority than about the attacks upon religion, he did voice the opinion of a large part of the Army by defending the compulsory church service. His view did not prevail. The order for the abolition of church services remained in force, and clergy in the Army lost much of their status.

So the rift between the two men widened. Von Brauchitsch declined to be present at the launching of the battleship *Bismarck*, and he was not present at the opening of the Great Automobile Exhibition in Berlin in February 1939. On such occasions the chief representative of the German armed forces was expected to be present. Hitler offered a solatium which in his fanatical egoism he may have believed was indeed an act of grace. He conferred upon the commander in chief the Golden party insignia for service rendered to the armed forces. To almost any officer, much more to the highest, it would seem like a sarcasm, and the value of the decoration to Von Brauchitsch was not enhanced by its being at the same time handed to General Keitel. Von Brauchitsch never wore this decoration on his tunic; since the outbreak of this war he has worn only the Iron Cross, first and second class, which he won in the last war, an attitude that has caused considerable speculation and comment. These were straws upon the water that were recalled when the Nazi tide was in full flood.

One of the main tasks set for the commander in chief as a result of the conclusion of the Axis pact was an examination of the war potential of Italy. His contacts with his opposite number in Italy and various other personalities of high standing in the Italian Army were frequent. This examination was not easy for Von Brauchitsch because he had to deal with a certain amount of bluffing on the part of Mussolini, who wanted to sell his military collaboration for economic support on the side of the Reich. Von Fritsch had discovered earlier that not everything was well in the Italian armed forces and that quite a considerable amount of the published armament programs remained only on paper. In his efforts to study the Italian army plans of mobilization Von Brauchitsch was constantly interfered with by the German Foreign Minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, who, as the chief artificer of the Axis alliance, wanted to see his work consolidated at any price.

On April 5, 1939, Von Brauchitsch and General Pariani, the Italian Secretary of State for War, met in Innsbruck in Austria.

Immediately afterward Italy occupied Albania, and beyond the Axis borders two events followed that were of major significance for the future. First Great Britain introduced compulsory military service; secondly the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, Stoyadinovitch, declared his leaning, long since formed, toward the Axis partners despite the popular feeling of his country for England and all that name stood for in Balkan memories. The German talks with Italy were now enlarged, and Von Brauchitsch went to Italy, where he saw Mussolini at his retreat at Rocca della Caminate, near Forli. At these conferences the Italian Minister of Finance, Admiral Thaon di Revel, as well as General Teruzzi (colonies) and General Russo (militia), also took part.

The obvious deficiencies of the Italian Army were covered by the Italians with the excuse that the Italian colonies would more than ever guard the southern flank of the European continent during any future war. The reports of General Teruzzi were more rosy than credible; they were of such exaggerated excellence that Von Brauchitsch made up his mind to inspect Cyrenaica and Tripolitania himself. For this journey, on which he was again accompanied by Pariani, Von Brauchitsch used special "Gibli" planes that were adapted for flying during sandstorms. Yet, as though the weather conspired to expose the inefficiency of Italian preparations, the party was forced down in exactly such a sandstorm as had been guarded against. This was at Ara Fileni, after Marshal Balbo, the governor and commander in chief of Tripolitania, had personally made all arrangements for the plane's safe landing. The impression Von Brauchitsch gained was naturally unfavorable. On the German commander in chief's return to Rome, Mussolini accordingly ordered one of his fantastic parades, in which 30,000 men, 300 guns, 700 machine guns, and 1,000 cars with many reserve officers passed before the leaders' gaze. In Mussolini's subsequent speech, which was ostensibly addressed to the masses outside the Palazzo Venezia, but which was intended for the German commander in chief, he said: "You have seen a memorable military parade. Undoubtedly

our military strength is great, but the decision of our hearts is still greater, and when and if the hour comes we shall prove it." Still Von Brauchitsch was not convinced, and he returned to Berlin with the conviction that Italy would become a liability rather than an asset in any future war.

When Von Ribbentrop saw that the circumspect opinion which the commander in chief had formed of Italy as an ally was about to break up the Axis pact he used an argument against which Von Brauchitsch had no reply. Von Ribbentrop, who was accepted by Hitler as an authority on Great Britain and British questions, said the time lag in British rearmament would be so great that even the worst Italian preparations in the Middle East would be sufficient to give the Axis control of the Mediterranean for years to come. Von Ribbentrop had also met Count Ciano, the Italian Foreign Minister, at the Villa d'Este, and had received the Italian version of the commander in chief's tour of inspection. As a further argument Von Ribbentrop had represented to Hitler that the commander in chief was not objective in his report on the military effectiveness of Italy, but was influenced by his dislike of anything Fascist or National Socialist. Again Hitler was inclined to believe Von Ribbentrop and his supporters inside the German Government.

While international high tension went on, Von Brauchitsch indirectly retorted upon Von Ribbentrop in an address to the Nazi party district leaders in the Palatinate in western Germany, where he expressed his faith in the Führer in terms that were new to him. "The German Army will hoist the German flag wherever Hitler commands." The soldier seemed to be softening into the diplomat. A complete accord was reached at Walhausen, and was confirmed two days later during a dinner party in Karlsruhe. Clearly Von Brauchitsch had decided not to insist on the opinion he had formed of Italy's military weakness.

In a further effort to counter the political machinations of Von Ribbentrop and the rest of the party and to establish his position with Hitler, Von Brauchitsch dropped all reserve in references to Poland, making a more combative declaration than

any that had yet come from even Goebbels or Von Ribbentrop. One of the most conspicuous examples was his address to 2,500 cadets at the monument at Tannenberg in East Prussia, when he said, "I wish to emphasize that this land [East Prussia] is ancient German land. Hitler knew that when he said that it was important to free Prussia really and completely. To affirm today that Prussia is German is an answer to those who put forward supposed claims to this territory, and who would make believe that the strength of its maintenance as German is no longer what it was. That is a mistake which a soldier does not like to refute with words. We do not seek battle, but we fear it still less."

With this speech Von Brauchitsch fell completely into the line of propaganda that had been issued by Goebbels' office on the Wilhelmplatz; a failure of scruple, one would say who had seen the Nazi virus working among such men. To attempt to brand Poland as an aggressor against East Prussia was transparent chicanery, for the world and the simplest of Germans knew that nothing was farther from the intention of the Polish Government than to attack a single square mile of German territory. For Nazi policy, however, the utterances of the commander in chief at this particular moment had a massive effect, just because his statements had always been cautious and based upon facts rather than upon purposeful assumptions. His collaboration with the German propaganda machine at this stage may have been, in fact, of decisive value, a fact that should be taken into account more seriously by those who would separate German militarists from the Nazi party.

At the grand strategical conference of all German leaders presided over by Hitler on August 8, 1939, Von Brauchitsch examined the military situation as it might develop in the next few weeks or days. Here Von Brauchitsch launched his master stroke in diplomacy against some of his colleagues in the Army whose capacity in their positions he had always considered to be weak. After a strategical survey of Europe, backed by the researches of all departments of the German General Staff and by the plans that had been conceived in the Reichswehr Ministry

during the preceding twelve years, Von Brauchitsch gave his judgment on the military Under-Secretary of State, the man who was ambitious enough to think that he was the close rival of the commander in chief, General Wilhelm Keitel. The case which Keitel attempted to make contrasted sharply with the calm but acute and comprehensive arguments of the commander in chief. At this moment Hitler saw more than ever that he could not do without a commander in chief of Von Brauchitsch's caliber.

Before the start of operations against Poland, Von Brauchitsch had made it a cardinal point that he should be assured of Russian neutrality. He was possibly better informed than anyone else about the strength of the Russian Army, and on such a subject his judgment was unquestioned inside the German Army. At the same time it is not true, as has been reported, that Von Brauchitsch had threatened to resign should Russia not remain neutral. It was understood that the condition of Russian neutrality was assumed by the German High Command. The Polish campaign thus started on the lines of a plan that was almost identical with the plan drawn up by Von Fritsch, and it was conducted with no interference whatever on the part of Hitler or the party or the government.

After the conclusion of the campaign against Poland, Hitler, intoxicated with the heady wine of victory, returned to his headquarters at Godesberg on the Rhine with the idea that a small-scale German offensive in the sector of Saarbrücken, the only point where the French had shown some activity, was now called for. In this Hitler was seconded by General Keitel, who took every opportunity to confirm the supreme commander in any opinion that might clash with that of the actual commander in chief. Von Brauchitsch cut short all these plans by tendering his resignation.

Though the resulting tension inside the German High Command was concealed as far as possible, some information did leak out to neutral countries, and at the end of October 1939 the Public Relations Department of the German High Command

was asked by a newspaper correspondent whether it was true that the commander in chief was tendering his resignation. Keitel, who learned of this question, and who had just been severely snubbed by Von Brauchitsch, instructed one of his minor officials to give the following answer: "No German commander in chief can resign in time of war. He might, however, be dismissed from his position." It was the usual vindictive way in which Keitel showed that he could not "take it."

Like the plan of campaign against Poland, the operational part of the campaign against Norway had also been drawn up before Von Brauchitsch took over, but the immediate organization of the forces for this amphibious undertaking was absolutely under his personal control. The assembling of German shipping as early as February 1940 in the Baltic ports of Danzig, Gdynia, and Memel was executed under his personal orders. The subsequent transfer of these forces to the western Baltic ports and the contingent orders to the naval command were also given by Von Brauchitsch, though he allowed full credit to the Secretary of State of the Air Ministry, General Milch.

In the campaign in the west, starting May 10, 1940, Von Brauchitsch's responsibility for the design and execution was more complete. Far less than in the case of Poland and Norway could he rely upon plans that had been made many years before. Both Von Fritsch and the first chief of the General Staff, General Beck, had prepared plans for such a large-scale operation, and certainly the German Army did not embark upon this very important phase of the war without having previously studied a directive, but the final touches were put in by Von Brauchitsch. In peacetime conferences of the German General Staff, and in the discussions between chiefs of the operational departments of the Reichswehr Ministry, Von Brauchitsch was never tired of pointing out errors made during the operations in August and September 1914 that led to the German disaster of the Battle of the Marne.

In these discussions Von Brauchitsch always put himself in the place of the French commander in chief, Joffre, and drew up

pictures of the possible French counterstrokes to German plans of invasion. Von Brauchitsch was not a complete believer in the Schlieffen Plan. He agreed that a push through Holland and Belgium against northern France was the only conceivable operation for the first part of the German offensive against France, but differed regarding the second part of this operation. In substantiating this difference of opinion he referred to events before the Battle of the Marne and based upon them his strongest argument in favor of the plan which finally broke resistance in France in 1940.

Von Brauchitsch believed that the German Army in 1914 was, from the start of operations, running into a trap. He showed that General Joffre's arrangements as early as August 25, 1914, must lead to the Battle of the Marne. The formation of the French 6th Army under General Maunoury, which was more or less a detached body to the east of the main French forces, and the elastic maneuvers of the French 5th Army a fortnight before the Battle of the Marne began, operated according to the plans of the French commander in chief to draw the German 1st and 2nd armies into this very trap. Joffre, according to this argument, had succeeded in a difficult task despite the fact that he had to ask General Lanrezac to cede the command of the 5th French Army to General Franchet d'Esperey, an emergency arrangement which, calling for cool nerves, had been executed with great skill.

The movement of the 1st German Army under Von Kluck and the 2nd German Army under Von Bülow over the Marne and in a southeasterly direction upon the Seine, if successful, would have forced the bulk of the French Army to fight with a reversed front—that is, the French would face Paris instead of defending Paris. But, argued Von Brauchitsch, would not any present French commander in chief, and especially General Gamelin, who had been at Joffre's headquarters during those crucial days in 1914, be certain to repeat a maneuver that had once been so successful?

Von Brauchitsch calculated the chances for a complete success

in forcing the French armies to fight with a reversed front as only one to ten, and that the overwhelming probability was that the German offensive group would see a repetition of the Battle of the Marne. With this convincing argument he was able to reconstruct the concepts of the German General Staff and to establish that the main German objective in any campaign against France should be the Channel coast, not immediately the southeastern interior of France. In this view the outflanking of the Maginot Line and the penetration of the southeastern territory of France were of importance only during a second phase of any campaign against France. The splitting of the main Allied forces was of primary importance and had to be achieved in the first phase of any offensive. Von Brauchitsch acted in accordance with this plan when the operations started.

The strategical principle of Von Brauchitsch's conception was to isolate a strong group of Allied forces in Belgium or northern France, and to paralyze at the same time the remainder of the Allied forces on a line roughly from Paris to the northwestern end of the Maginot Line. In all this the German initiative was essential because, if the dictation of movement to the Allies was to cease or be interrupted, then the problem that had led to the Battle of the Marne would again arise. Any lack of initiative on the German side would inevitably result in a severe menace to the German right wing.

To illustrate with an example: the B.E.F. and the French 5th Army, isolated in Belgium and northwestern France, were kept on the defensive until they ceased to become operational formations. If that process had been neglected for only a day or two, the same Allied forces would have assumed at once the role which the successful 6th French Army had assumed during the Battle of the Marne in 1914, and would have fallen onto the flank of the Germans. The danger that loomed up here for Von Brauchitsch was that a large repetition of the Battle of the Marne could be fought somewhere on the line between Sedan and Luxembourg. In all this the commander in chief was able to exploit to the fullest extent the new tactical facility added to the

execution of such a strategical conception by the existence of armored formations that possessed the speed necessary to achieve quick exploitation of initial success.

Even after the battle in France it has been held in many Allied and neutral circles—to some extent even in less informed German military circles—that Von Brauchitsch employed in its essentials the ideas of the Schlieffen Plan of 1912. In reality, the commander in chief followed his own lines of thought. To think that the Germans achieved their victory simply by the supremacy of their material and a better conception of tactical fighting is to give Von Brauchitsch less than his due.

The campaign in the west added to the importance of the commander in chief's position in Germany. Such camarilla attempts on the part of Von Ribbentrop and Dr. Goebbels as preceded the opening of the war in 1939 could not be tried against him now, in wartime. His place in German estimation, like that of the German armed forces, was established by success, but this could not be said of the government, still less of the Nazi party. The practical consequences became apparent as soon as the Russian campaign started. The military formations of the party, the elite divisions of the Waffen SS, which up to that time had not been under fire except to a small extent in the Balkan campaign, were now in their entirety put at the disposal of the commander in chief, and thus largely withdrawn from the control of Heinrich Himmler. The governing idea in the creation of this force was to retain a crack corps, one hundred per cent fanatically Hitlerite, that would offset the power and prestige of the military caste in Germany. Though comparatively small in numbers, the significance of this party arming at home became greater the more deeply the Wehrmacht became engaged in field operations and the SS became the sole armed power on the home front.

Von Brauchitsch ordered these divisions to be distributed among the army groups that were now attacking Russia. Though Himmler might have watched this development with misgivings,

he was helpless in the spring and summer of 1941 to do anything about it.

The German motive in attacking Russia has been overlooked by public opinion again and again since the first shock of surprise. Naturally there has been a strong presumption that Hitler attacked against the better judgment of his generals, and even that some of the military leaders were deceived up to the last moment. This view is incomplete. Von Brauchitsch, as the easternmost independent Reichswehr commander during the years preceding his appointment to the army group in Leipzig, had made a thorough study of the general construction of the Red Army. In this he was assisted by the foremost German Panzer specialist, General Heinz Guderian, who had examined closely the Russian mechanized forces. Both men came to the conclusion that Russia was stronger than could have been seen in watching her peacetime military maneuvers; and the operations of the Russo-Finnish War in 1939-40 were even more misleading.

It is possible to show that the chief of the German High Command was under no illusion about the Russian strength. His military dispositions and his plan of attack are evidences of foreknowledge. Von Brauchitsch is one of the followers of the German military school of thought that had been on its guard against "conquest of geography." The trisection of the entire German force—Von Leeb in the north, Von Bock in the center, Von Rundstedt in the south—was disposed with the object of dividing the entire Russian field army during the first few weeks and months without being compelled to wage battles many hundreds of miles or, as it might have been, over a thousand miles inside Russia. The three German bodies of operation—their strength went far beyond that of army groups—were to link after certain advances behind the Russians, and then fight battles of annihilation. It follows that each of these formations in its entirety was part of an enormous pincer.

Operations in Russia, however, developed differently because the Russian General Staff was on its guard. Pincers did come into action, but they protruded from the individual groups that

should, as a whole, have been part of a larger pincer, and the groups themselves operated independently instead of working together. In this lies the first cause of the failure of the German campaign in Russia in 1941. To a man of Von Brauchitsch's mental caliber and strategical training such a development must have become clear soon after the campaign started. In fact, as this campaign went forward to its ineffective end, a clash of opinion became apparent between Hitler as supreme commander and his immediate entourage, made up of officers less gifted than Von Brauchitsch and some of the members of his High Command.

The following account of a development that led to the final dismissal of Walther von Brauchitsch as commander in chief of the German armed forces is taken from reliable neutral sources whose representatives were able to watch events on the spot, and this has been supplemented with material that has since reached the writer from a source of unquestionable integrity.

Before the last assault on Moscow—which was executed against the advice and without the assistance of Von Brauchitsch—the problem under discussion inside the German High Command, in which Hitler took an active part, was represented by the demand from the side of Von Brauchitsch for a withdrawal to a safe and secure winter line west of Smolensk, running through part of the Baltic States and ending in the western part of the Ukraine. Von Brauchitsch wanted to play for safety. Hitler, as supreme commander, did not agree, and though he had kept quiet and abstained from interfering in military operations during the previous German campaigns, he thought that the time had come to make a stand, especially in face of the obvious reverses which the German armed forces and their professional leaders had now suffered in Russia. The usually composed commander in chief is reported to have lost his temper. What would this mean? Nothing is rarer among men holding power than toleration of outspoken criticism of their own actions and judgment. Even Caesar did not know magnanimity. One of the kind things said of Napoleon was that he could suffer and forgive even insolence

in favorite associates if only it were uttered in private. In public a man so eminent, who has no element of the saint, is governed by vanity and the fear that in allowing his conduct to be questioned he loses something of his eminence in the eyes of other men; and he will not recognize in himself the petty motive and the fear, but will believe he owes it to his high position and to the state to strike down his critics. Vindictiveness will be confused in his mind with public duty. Nor are public men in a democratic country immune from this weakness in insisting upon their strength. Joseph Chamberlain, justly known for his high civic consciousness, heard people in his company discussing someone whom he then recalled with this: "Did you speak of A? He was once insolent to me in public, a thing I never forgive." Perhaps only a man on the highest level of moral greatness, only one perhaps who looks beyond other men for his ultimate sanctions, such as Abraham Lincoln, could feel his essential personal values undiminished by direct contradiction and criticism and forget it.

Could Hitler, who had out-Heroded Herod and demanded worship from other men, be expected to brook the exposure of being outfaced in his council on a military question, and by a man known by all present to be immeasurably his superior in all military matters? Hitler, who had taken the place of Kaiser Wilhelm II and had before him the example of that strident war lord's "Who opposes me him will I shatter"? Hitler, who long before, when declaring the will of the Nazi party, had warned the German nation: "Those who oppose us will be broken"?

The issue was so clear that so perceptive a mind as that of the then commander in chief must have known the risk. It was to be Hitler or himself and the Army. Even if he knew he must lose, such a man might well decide that he would no longer play for safety or commit himself more deeply to a gangster in power. It was a late decision, when we remember Von Fritsch, but a decision it probably was. And a fighting fall was better than a gradual eclipse not free from loss of self-respect, or even from degradation.

This personal collision governs the scene, but the stone that

started the avalanche was found in another question of less importance, but of historical interest. General Jodl, the leading general in Hitler's personal staff, thought any disclosure about German communication difficulties in Russia at that time would have a devastating effect upon the German public morale. He insisted upon carrying on a propaganda that claimed that "everything was going well" in the east. In this propaganda he also falsified the reports upon German casualties and exaggerated to an unbelievable extent the losses of the Russians. The spokesman of the German High Command, General Dittmar, was a willing tool for this purpose. Thus Von Brauchitsch, who by December 1941 knew that German casualties were higher than one million in dead and at least three million wounded, saw that the German public mind was being fed on figures that could not be compared with the actual truth. He maintained that though Jodl's line might help the High Command over a short period and deceive the people at home for a few months, the recoil when the real figures became known would be all the more devastating, and the resulting deterioration of German home morale more swift and serious. He therefore strongly advised that the people at home should be told what was going on. One might say he was the first advocate of the gloom propaganda which Dr. Josef Goebbels was forced to adopt after Stalingrad in 1942, and which he intensified during the bombing of the Ruhr and the Rhineland to a quite surprising extent.

The dismissal of Von Brauchitsch came as a shock to the German armed forces and the people at home. It had to be softened, and the German Government issued a statement in which they said that "Von Brauchitsch's farewell took a dignified and solemn form in keeping with the greatness of the moment. Although nothing is known in Berlin military circles about another appointment for Herr von Brauchitsch, these circles emphasize that Herr von Brauchitsch has neither been placed 'at disposal' nor on the retired list; for in Germany, as happened with Field Marshal von Mackensen, a field marshal is never retired."

To the German soldier and also to the German civilian one thing was immediately conspicuous and at the same time highly suspicious. This was the fact that the government (for which read Hitler) referred to the former commander in chief only twenty-four hours after his dismissal as Herr von Brauchitsch, which, of course, as every German understood it, meant adding insult to injury. The German explanations went on, and though they dealt less with Von Brauchitsch, they were announcing the change in the German war direction, and this epic—an epic it has become in the light of history—goes on to say:

In connection with an appeal which the Führer addressed to the soldiers of the Army and the SS upon concentrating the leadership of the whole armed forces and of the supreme command of the Army in his own hands, it is stated in Berlin today [December 22, 1941] that the war is now approaching its decisive stage. It is therefore understandable that the Führer should now take over the Supreme Command of the Army on which the main burden of operations will in future largely rest, in order to achieve even greater concentrations of the German forces than hitherto.

It is recalled [continued this utterance] in military circles that the plans for the Polish campaign in all its stages, the unique performance of the Norwegian enterprise, the campaign in France, and in the Balkans, the occupation of Crete, the action of General Rommel in North Africa, above all, the tremendous battles of destruction in the East, originated entirely from the spiritual initiative and the geniuslike strategy of the Führer himself, and that thus in practice he has always been leading the German Army. Thus the concentration of leadership of all the forces and of the Supreme Command of the Army in his hands may merely be regarded as an elimination of a stage in the military command.

So with a stroke of the pen the Führer claimed what had never been his work. Von Brauchitsch must have felt bitterly this experience of the usual Nazi tactics of kicking a man out of office as soon as he is no longer of use. The actual reason for his retirement was given as ill-health, but here the usually efficient propaganda authorities in Berlin contradicted themselves on more than

one occasion. According to one official source in Berlin, Von Brauchitsch was suffering from cardiac trouble, while the High Command issued a statement that he was suffering from "inflammation of the lungs." The historical fact is that shortly after his dismissal he appeared in civilian clothes in a Viennese hotel and enjoyed a long rest without showing any signs of ill-health whatever.

It was in this way that the commander in chief of the German forces that had waged five campaigns disappeared from the active scene. His name came back in connection with one of the most surprising documents that has left Germany, certainly very much against the will of the government. The *Manchester Guardian* of June 6, 1942, contained the following report:

A British United Press correspondent on the German frontier writes that he has succeeded in obtaining a copy of the letter to Field Marshal von Brauchitsch which created a sensation in Germany when it was circulated last winter. Not only did it go to Von Brauchitsch but to other members of the German High Command, and whoever was responsible for it took good care that copies should also get to a certain foreign correspondent in Berlin. It has now been smuggled out of the country. The letter, a violent attack on the Nazi administration and war planning, reads in part as follows:

"Clausewitz's maxim to the effect that war is a continuation of politics by force presupposes leadership, arms, and equipment adequate to the successful pursuit of the particular objective. We have pursued this objective for several years now and our leadership does not appear to have advanced much, if at all, toward our goal.

"We have had great victories—Poland overrun in a few days, France, Holland, Belgium, and the Balkans, but have we dealt a single disabling blow to our main enemies, the British? They fled before our victorious armies in Flanders and were hopelessly lost at Dunkirk. A mere mopping-up operation remained, and the next thing we knew was that they were all safe in England. Where was our leadership then? Where was our Air Force?

"Then, after all the discussion of the Russian problem and explanations to the people that a two-front war was impossible, our leaders decided to attack Russia although our most formidable

enemy was being helped by all other nations and British confidence was growing in spite of defeat after defeat. Then our leadership debased the honor of the German Army with butchers from the SS corps.

"Still the German people think we are going forward to victory. But you, General, know better. It is time for you to save the German people, without whom the world cannot live. If you do not do so everything will be destroyed. What is leading us to destruction? What is debasing our whole nation? It is Hitler and National Socialism. General, you must act now. Your oath no longer binds you, for the desperate need of the German people relieves you of it. Do your duty and give life again to Germany. . . ."

The letter concludes with a suggestion that it was written by a high German officer. Shortly after its appearance—its existence and the fact that it had been widely circulated were notorious in Berlin—Hitler dismissed Von Brauchitsch.

VI

Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel

Ambition can creep as well as soar. Edmund Burke,
LETTERS ON THE REGICIDE PEACE, 1797.

Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel cannot be ranked with the men whose careers we have treated earlier as a soldier or as a man. Though second only to the Führer as chief of the High Command, he stands for nothing in the shaping of the German Army or in the conduct of the war, and in his character there is nothing that would bring about a psychological struggle between his hold on German military standards and the adoption of the debasing methods imposed by Hitler and his gang. His job as Hitler's instrument fitted him. His eminence in the Army, like that of Hitler's Gestapo in the nation, illustrates perfectly the observation of Confucius twenty-five hundred years ago: "When a country is at war it is stirred to its depths and the scum rises to the top"—that is, if we assume a war conceived in stealth, like Germany's, for a nefarious purpose, and prosecuted by means that violate every standard and every instinct that sweeten the neighborly life of mankind.

Confucius had observed a fact that no doubt applies in some degree to all wars (and even to struggles for success in peace), but it is demonstrably not equally true of all nations engaged in this war. The trouble about the sayings of wise men and of the aphorisms of men of high reputation in any walk of life, as of the wisecracks of the more obscure, is that they can be balanced or canceled out by other maxims from other thinkers or other

wits among our neighbors. John Ruskin, for example, wrote that all the highest virtues of man were the result of war, and he confessed that he could not explain why. It may be suggested that where so much good comes forth from so much evil, the motive is all. Selfless personal sacrifice for a lofty cause must work within men and women differently from the aims of men who order or perpetrate the foul deeds now placed beyond question by the official records of the Allied nations.

It is not to be supposed that Keitel protested to Hitler when he knew, as he must have known, that a German soldier in Poland would crush the head of a newborn child under his boots before the eyes of its Jewish mother. A man does not stand at the right hand of a Hitler if he has the character to risk head-on collisions. A Keitel succeeds more by negative than positive qualities—not so much by what is in him as by what is left out of him.

Look at this war lord. For his sixty years he has worn well, and in the sufficient gray hair that covers his head the original blond can still be recognized. In his office he sits impassively behind a desk. His uniform hangs faultlessly upon his six-foot soldierly figure. As a visitor you will be received with a cold stare. The great man does nothing to break the silence. This is part of his technique, for Keitel loves to make a visitor, whether soldier or civilian, uncomfortable in his presence. The cold stare continues, and still the field marshal says nothing. He may sprawl in his chair, still not speaking. He seems hardly aware of your presence, or he is indifferent. You are to be impressed, not he. You must know, as he desires, that his thoughts are on some higher plane.

Possibly this aloofness in the silence has led you to feel he is really unconscious that you are there, and your gaze has wandered, your attention caught by an arresting legend, a huge motto that hangs framed in gold behind Keitel's desk.

*Wer auf Gott vertraut
Und feste um sich baut,
Der hat auf keinen Sand gebaut.*

Which means roughly that he who trusts in God, and in addition lays about him, is batting on a good wicket. This is a worthy sentiment; the man in front of it must be a good German. You forget yourself and smile; worse than that, you forget Keitel. Be sure he does not miss that. So you are not impressed—the first sound in the interview is a roar. To lose this first round in this game of first impressions is intolerable to him, and he loses his temper before a word has been spoken.

We will change the scene: Keitel is watching maneuvers in Gross-Born in Pomerania. War has not yet begun, but Keitel is a general; he has watched the maneuvers all day. He has watched silently, intently, and now he asks a question.

"I see no artillery, gentlemen. Where is the divisional artillery?"

There is an uncomfortable silence. In even tones he repeats his question. A staff officer explains in a half whisper. There is no artillery. *This* is a reconnaissance exercise.

That is a story told in Prussian military messes.

With the exception of Kleist, Keitel is possibly Hitler's least competent general, and there will be nothing more unheroic in the history of this war than the scene in the caravan at Compiègne after Hitler had put his signature to the Franco-German armistice and Keitel was left to complete details with the suppliant Marshal Pétain. "As soldier to soldier," Keitel told the octogenarian, France would not regret this agreement. We shall show in such a sketch as he is worth what were the qualities, appropriate to a military burlesque of the films, for which Keitel was conspicuous among soldiers. And Pétain was worthy of his operatic steel. It seems severe, but it is just, to recall that the octogenarian who was then selling France and Frenchmen into servility or slavery was the man who would have abandoned Verdun and was forced by the spirit of the old France to hold it. The immortal vow, "They shall not pass," with which so many French soldiers were faithful unto death, might well have been "He shall not run." Pétain, who in that war would have aban-

done the Channel ports and the British, was well confronted by Hitler's man of straw.

Wilhelm Keitel was born in 1882, the son of a small estate owner who farmed his own land. This was enough to separate the family from trade but not enough to put it in the Junker class. In him insistence on social values, common to German officers, was therefore emphasized by unpretentious beginnings. He is not a Prussian but has, through contact, absorbed the caste obsession and distorted it through the medium of his own underlying sense of social inferiority. Hence the endless striving to compensate, the desire to impress—both manifestations of the sense of inferiority.

This manifestation is personal, but in a larger sense it is also national. Keitel's weakness is a national failing exemplified in the Nazi myth of German racial superiority. Shortly before this war Keitel visited Egypt; while there he was joined by a party of British officers in a tour of some ancient tombs. For some reason there was Egyptian official interference. It may have been the native genius for making difficulties; there may have been good reasons; but, from whatever cause, the party was prevented from seeing certain antiquities. Keitel was furious; first with the Egyptian officials, and then with the British method of adapting themselves to the situation without forcing a quarrel and possibly a little international friction. Keitel let out one of those expressions of the German mind which we have so long disdainfully scorned to our great cost. "If you don't know how to treat these slaves," he said, "others will show you."

If lack of background is one cause of Keitel's irritable self-assertion, a prolonged lack of success is another. He joined the German Army in 1901 and soon prepared himself for a monotonous existence as a subaltern. It was early evident to his superiors that this blond idol was destined for a career of unrelieved mediocrity. What could the future hold for him? He had no brains to speak of, among men chosen and promoted for native intelligence and professional efficiency. He might, if he lasted the course, work his way through three decades to some minor



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FIELD MARSHAL WILHELM KEITEL, Hitler's favorite military yes man, who is called by the other leaders the "comic-strip general."



majority. They would push him into the darkest corner of the Eastern Provinces, where sooner or later he would work out his destiny to the bowler hat. Life is grim and life is earnest, but there is no need to make it grimmer than necessary. Keitel was frequently advised by his colonel to retire on reaching the rank of captain and seek a more profitable career in civil life. It is charitable to hope that his Colonel has been dead these many years.

When the war of 1914 came, one might suppose that Keitel's chance arrived, that active service opened up vistas of success. Unfortunately, this is a true story: he received neither mention, decoration, nor promotion throughout those four years. Somehow he landed an administrative job with the Flanders Corps under the command of the infamous Admiral von Schroeder. Known by unpleasing names to his associates, and still more unpleasant ones to the Belgians, this callous seaman had been named "The Lion of Flanders" by the Kaiser. In the mind of Wilhelm II this *nom de guerre*, when bestowed by an emperor, placed it on a level with "The Scourge of God," "Coeur de Lion," and others. But in the eyes of the majority of the German Army, to have remained on this man's staff carries a stigma. The more uncharitable of his brother officers might have described Keitel's new appointment as that of butcher's assistant. Whatever his duties, the military knowledge gained was small. The admiral himself was not only hated by the Belgians for his cruelty but also by his own men for his ambitious and bloody military projects. He was, for instance, a devotee of the mass frontal attack, a maneuver which is apt to succeed only with appalling loss of life. Keitel, however, had little to do with operational work. Without receiving decoration or promotion he remained throughout the war on Schroeder's staff, a performance itself unique, since all his colleagues one by one had escaped to more congenial surroundings.

Keitel had one gift. He was quick to see, on the rise of Hitler, that advancement lay in applauding the aims of the Nazi party and in showing as often and as openly as possible his adoration

of the Führer. Among his military colleagues the competition in this crawl was not severe. Even Von Reichenau, known to be a sympathizer of the Nazis, managed to create the impression that he was no more than "inclined to esteem certain points in the Nazi program." Hitler, for his part, was swift to recognize a friend; we should say a tool. Here was a soft spot in that hard core of reserve, that camp of lurking opposition, the Reichswehr.

The postwar years in Germany had laid about them, harshly wrecking old institutions, tearing at the existing social and economic structure, crushing, leveling. It was a time of every man for himself, when past successes as well as past failures were forgotten, when an idea might gain impetus overnight and the unknown adventurer flourish. Thus it was that a man like Keitel, together with a host of other undistinguished climbers, pushed his way upward. Truly the country had been stirred to its depths; the scum was rising to the top.

Despite the strong protests of Von Fritsch, Hitler managed to establish his new friend as under-secretary in the Reichswehr Ministry when Von Reichenau left that office to take over the command of an army corps. In some ways Keitel became the first Quisling spying for his master within the Ministry, thereby sparing Hitler anxiety from a quarter where there might have been much to fear. To Keitel, in fact, goes the credit for the final domination of the Reichswehr by the Nazi party. When Von Fritsch was forced to retire in 1938 Hitler rewarded Keitel with the appointment of Military Secretary of State in the War Ministry under himself as supreme commander and Von Brauchitsch as commander in chief. Today a crassly ignorant soldier holds sway in theory over men like Von Rundstedt.

To the outside world Keitel gradually became known by his repeated presence at the many conferences between Hitler and Mussolini. As the Führer speeds toward the Brenner in his bullet-proof train he is accompanied by his show general. Tall, fair, and dandified, this immaculate creature is a good pianist. We have seen his counterpart in many a film. The heel-clicking, suave

exquisite who easily becomes grim and sinister when occasion offers, and softens in the hour of relaxation, while his hands caress the keys in splendid Wagnerian chords. Among his own countrymen Keitel enjoys the sobriquet of "the comic-strip general."

As a showpiece, however, Hitler finds him useful, though it is probable that during important conferences the warrior is confined to set lines. In his master's absence he once attempted to bully Mussolini. This was in 1938 over a matter of the use of the port of Trieste by Austria. In those days the "bullfrog of the Pontine Marshes" was in the full tide of his inflation and was capable of giving as good as he got, and he gave back enough to arouse Keitel to a vindictive revenge. Keitel advised Hitler not to kiss Queen Helena's hand when introduced to her, and so it came about that the Führer, his ministers, and generals bowed deeply on introduction to the queen but otherwise ignored the royal hand. Only Goebbels failed to play the game, and afterward excused himself by saying that he had not heard the general's request.

It was in the Forest of Compiègne in the late summer of 1940, as we have seen, that Keitel had his finest hour. Here in the railway coach that twenty-two years before had seen the climax of Germany's humility Keitel read out Hitler's terms to the conquered French nation. In this supreme moment the big man with the little soul came into his own.

It is said that there may be merit without eminence; there is no eminence without some merit. What gift in particular besides stagecraft, what speciality among a crowd of military specialists does Keitel possess? How can he hope to compete with such experts as Guderian? In the high places of the German Army one *must* be expert at something. If you were to ask the field marshal, he would answer with two words. His special subject is North Africa. Had he not, shortly before the war, spent nearly three months on the African continent, finding time to visit Egypt, insult his hosts, and inspect some of the archaeological peculiarities of the country? He visited the Sudan and as a

glorified tourist trod the sands of Libya. We do not know what further knowledge he has acquired in those greenhouses where the Fatherland is said to harden her sons for the rigors of desert warfare.

It is not surprising if the field marshal is a difficult man to work with. His subordinates say there are times when he is impossible. There are moments when he will listen to no one, when he will not even answer but merely stare at the questioner with a fixed gaze. On such occasions he is doubtless wrapped in communion with his intuition—he has made a special study of imitating the Führer. Strangely, he does not care for social functions, preferring outdoor occupations such as walking and riding, though he is a bad horseman. He first discovered his affinity for these types of exercise on hearing that the Führer liked men of the open air. He lacks humor, even for a German, declaring that a signed portrait of Hitler is his most precious possession. In October 1938 he took personal charge of the new map of Czechoslovakia, taking it from Munich to Berlin and indicating proudly that he bore "his Führer's concrete evidence of a bloodless victory." It is reported that during the Polish campaign, after the early successes of the Reichswehr, he returned to headquarters in company with his master. A special compartment had been prepared in the train, and during the journey the two men disappeared into this sanctum, where for an hour and a half they indulged in an orgy of Wagnerian, heroic music.

In July 1941 his youngest son Hans, a lieutenant in the Reichswehr, was killed on the Eastern front, but in public, anyway, the elder Keitel maintained an unmoved exterior. It was un-Germanic, he said, to mourn a son who had attained the supreme honor of losing his life in battle. In contrast, when his elder son was wounded and convalescing in Italy, the young man was perpetually followed by affectionate parental telegrams.

What is the attitude of Germany's real soldiers toward this man? There are generals who to his face treat him with bare respect, and Von Rundstedt has described his activities in the

Reichswehr Ministry as "a chain of monkey tricks." There is little doubt that but for his close friendship with Himmler and Von Ribbentrop he would long ago have been replaced by an abler man. His case has even engaged the attention of the high army medical authorities. While Von Brauchitsch was his superior, the question of Keitel's mental balance came to a head, and the medical authorities proposed to submit documents to prove his instability.

The career of Keitel is an object lesson, a possible source of comfort. To the gloomy careerist the name may be a clarion call of hope. No matter how undistinguished, how undeserving the past, it is never too late to succeed. Nearer home, Keitel may be considered by those who imagine that democracy holds the monopoly for stupidity in high places.

In the wake of Hitler's successes, we are now beginning to see the shadows of relentless, pursuing blunders. It may well be that among these history will point a silent finger at the name of Wilhelm Keitel.

VII

Field Marshal Fedor von Bock

The blood of the soldier makes the glory of the general.

H. C. Bohn, HANDBOOK OF PROVERBS.

Medium-sized, thin but wiry, the general still moves quickly at sixty-three years of age. His piercing gray eyes, in a severely lined face, look through you, their appraising regard not softened by any amiable pretense. He is content to appear what he is, a disciplinarian, but his cold detachment would just as well become a hangman. Speaking with the nasal accent generally acquired by the Prussian guards officer, he behaves always in the convention of his type, movements jerky, gestures abrupt; and his converse even with civilians goes on with the staccato of dictated field orders. He will ask for extreme privation from his men, and will share it. His orders become law the moment they are issued, and they will be unchangeable, even for himself.

Despising the "softening influences of culture and civilization," as he calls them, Von Bock should have been born during the time when Prussia alone counted in Germany. From him there was no response to the National Socialist Government's efforts to break down barriers of local tradition and custom between the originally very distinct states and districts of Germany, and for him Prussian conduct and mannerism are superior and Prussia's own, not to be imitated by the less fortunate. The supremacy of Prussia and Prussianism is to him a deep conviction religiously held. If he has a mental awareness of other spheres of life than that of the Army, and other human beings than those in uniform, he gives them no consideration.

The "death and glory" theory is for him no mere propagandist device. He is among the men who for generations by that cult of death have made Germany the Ishmaelite among nations and turned her hand against others; men who have too successfully put the brake on the weak liberal thought, diluted with nationalism, which glimpsed the normal human instinct for the enlargement of life among all men by peace and serenity.

Hardened by training, fortified by fanatical belief in his professional way of life, he could fast for many hours and then be indifferent to what he ate and drank. For all that a man pays in sensibility. Not interested in entertainment of any kind, Von Bock has confessed that the only form of art to which he can respond is the performance of a brass band. With such extremes it would be normal to find some quality of human fellowship, if not of piety, flourishing with equal intensity. But this is not recognizable. The influence of a Spartan regimen depends on the direction of the mind; the rigorous bodily habit of a Von Bock makes him more effective only in his barbarous cult. His professional skill had no application to civic life.

Nor can it be said that his word was true as his sword. With him mental "slimness" was a weapon, appropriate to the record of Prussian governments. The English liberal press, rebuking Lord Roberts for his warnings in 1913, asked when Prussia had broken her pledged word. The way of a Von Bock, like that of Prussia before and since 1914, mocks at such false idealism. For Von Bock the interests of the Army could not be thwarted by an assurance or even a word of honor that tied Germany's hands against rearmament.

Von Bock could sacrifice comfort to physical hardihood and military efficiency, but not his own reputation to give due credit to others. With a correct sense of his own limitations he will listen to advice from his staff and act upon it, but without any gesture of acknowledgment. His career tells us as much of Germany's military failures as of her successes, and a good deal of her moral littleness.

Fedor von Bock was born on December 4, 1880, in the small out-of-date fortress of Kuestrin, a son of the Prussian general, Moritz von Bock. We shall not understand Von Bock without a close acquaintance with his childhood, where may be found the key to ideas and characteristics that have puzzled not only the German Army but his personal friends.

The old fortress of Kuestrin on the river Oder, east of Berlin, was crammed with tokens of Prussia's early fighting history but had lost military significance long before young Fedor began to take note of this world about him. The eastern side of the Reich was then protected by the strong fortress belt of Thorn-Graudenz-Danzig running alongside the river Vistula. Kuestrin was not even a second-class fortress, but it supported a small garrison which was quartered in shelters and barracks that dated from the times of Frederick II, one hundred and thirty years back. The whole town bore witness to the period known inside Prussia as "Frederician." It was here that young Frederick had been taught the tragic lesson that changed his life. Nothing would be more deeply ingrained in the thought and feeling of Fedor. Young Frederick, as crown prince, leaned toward art and literature and therefore toward France as the fount of European culture. The strong and well-trained army which his father had created at the expense of the general welfare of Prussia was not even a recreation for him, still less a serious interest. So foreign to his nature was the enthusiasm of his father, the "soldier king," that he had made plans to escape to England, to marry an English princess, and to leave the spiritually barren court of Berlin. He was being helped by two young officer friends, Katte and Keith.

Captured in his attempt to leave Prussia, he and his friends were imprisoned in the fortress of Kuestrin. Katte was executed in the fortress yard before the prince's eyes. "To teach his son a lesson," Frederick William I ordered that he should be made to stand with his head against the window of his cell overlooking the courtyard, with his eyes open, to see his friend die for a fault that was in the first place his own. This was Prussian discipline.



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FIELD MARSHAL FEDOR VON BOCK, a second-grade general who believes his men should be glad to die for the fatherland.



Kuestrin thus stood in the minds of certain classes in Prussia as a symbol for discipline, stern and ruthless, overriding all human and family ties. It represented the cornerstone of that conception of life that made Prussia. Now, in the years between 1880 and 1895, the son of a Prussian general in his most impressionable years was imbibing these lessons of a past history, which were thus built into the very structure of his mind. The hours which young Fedor von Bock spent on the banks of the old fortress moat left upon him an indelible mark.

With this background he joined the famous cadet schools of Potsdam and Gross-Lichterfelde near Berlin. Even in the circle of these young cadets his deep Prussian brand was distinct. Among youngsters bred in the tradition of Brandenburgian-Prussian history, readily receptive to discipline in thought and action, young Von Bock was a conspicuous fanatic, who denied himself even healthy relaxation and scorned the spirit of play, the boyish jokes and games that find their place even in Prussia's military schools. The assertion of superiority which is among the roots of Prussianism stimulated him, and he had his pleasure in looking down on less fortunate citizens. For him every day, every hour not filled by some study of military science, by drill or other special aspect of an officer's education, was wasted, and he spoke volubly to his friends on the gospel he practiced. He tried, even while a cadet, to improve the methods of his teachers and of his commanding officer. No strictness in regimentation could satisfy him.

In all this the young man showed a temperament intense and responsive beyond what is common among the sons of the Prussian upper class, where, indeed, stolidity and even lethargy are frequent, and so mixed with an assumed impassivity as to seem general. Fedor von Bock would rather impress his colleagues with piercing eyes, abrupt gestures, and a general sense of urgency. In fact, he worked up an expressiveness seen oftener among the Latin race. His companions, aware of his historical background, nicknamed him "The Holy Fire of Kuestrin," but, while making fun of his excess in Prussian virtues, respected him

as a sincere devotee. He was one of them, separated only by greater gifts and a deeper sense of dedication.

Without his intensity and activity our cadet would have exposed a lack of grip in the more practical side of the school. His earnestness in idealizing Prussianism was more marked in him than intellectual power, and the highest marks were beyond him. Of this he was fully conscious, and strove to make up by industry and diligence what he lacked in intelligence. On more than one occasion he remained in Berlin during the holidays in order to complete his studies, a sacrifice more remarkable in a cadet than in a fully commissioned officer. But to his comrades this looked like stealing a march, and he was dubbed a place hunter, and that reputation stuck to him in his later and more responsible career, which hardly belied it.

In 1898 he joined the 5th Regiment of Prussian Foot Guards, one of the crack infantry formations of old Imperial Germany. In this regiment there were two definite classes, the young subalterns up to and including captains, and the ossified, experienced field officers whose ambitions more often centered around the court in Berlin and Potsdam than in their military duties. These seniors were apt to frown on youthful eagerness. As a go-getter, Von Bock was not popular, but he won some of the early rewards he sought. As a second lieutenant he was appointed battalion A.D.C. in 1904. Two years later, still a second lieutenant, he became regimental A.D.C., and in 1908 a first lieutenant.

The regimental A.D.C. to a guards regiment is an exposed position, and he was now in contact with circles in Berlin that could add favor to merit. The court, the government, political leaders of the Right, and the many cliques and associations that formed the background of the ruling class in Prussian Berlin took notice of young officers in conspicuous positions in the crack guards. If Von Bock had wanted such a career as can be founded less on professional claims than on personal influence in administrative-civilian quarters, he could have had that sort of success. But his aim was higher.

He had set his mind, as he had confessed to friends in earlier

days, on joining the General Staff whatever the cost. But during these years he learned, without receiving a formal rebuff, that he was not wanted. Efficiency and industry were not enough to win a young subaltern admittance to the General Staff. Natural gifts were needed that could never be obtained by diligence. The firebrand Von Bock, known for his flamboyant speeches in the officers' mess of the 5th Guards, was not exactly the type that was looked for by the General Staff, and it was equally impossible to have a man in that select corps who in the past had relied largely on crammers and other aids to push himself into the limelight of his profession. Von Bock was given to understand that the governing rules inside the Selection Department for the General Staff required more discretion, and he was quick to adapt himself. Less was now heard in the officers' mess of his slogan that "a soldier's profession should always be crowned by a heroic death in battle, sealing his definite mission for Emperor and Fatherland with the supreme sacrifice." His self-appointed mission to "educate spiritually" the officers in the 5th was abandoned.

During subsequent Imperial maneuvers he concentrated solely on the practical side of his position, and at last in 1910 he was transferred to the General Staff, though at first only in a temporary character, and by 1912, with the rank of captain, he had established himself firmly. Witty brother officers in the red brick building on the Königsplatz in Berlin remembered too well his past oratorical exploits; he was still branded as "the Fanatical Dier," and though now less vocal, he was never to lose his nickname. Indeed, when war was declared in August 1914, and the hecatombs piled higher every day, his declared passion, death-in-the-field, broke out again. To be killed by an enemy bullet, he would say, was a thing to be truly grateful for, and he went about improving the occasion, hurrying the German soldier to his happy doom.

It is known that if the General Staff had had the men to replace him, Von Bock would have been ordered to the front during the autumn of 1914, when the German Army lost in the

field a high percentage of its officers. Through this lack of officers alone, perhaps, he was able to hold his position on the General Staff up to 1916, when he took over a battalion of the 4th Prussian Foot Guards. It was in this command that he was decorated with the order *Pour le Mérite*. It is not exactly known for what he received this decoration. The official citation does not refer to his bravery with the almost formal adjective "conspicuous," but describes it as "incredible," a word unique in the official German military language of that time.

The rhetorical fire-eater withstood the test of the flames, which does not always happen. Von Bock has been justly credited with "cool nerves," as well as a complete disregard for his own life which was not enhanced in value by the equal disregard he had for the lives of the officers and men under his command. Major von Bock, as he was by then, is well remembered in the annals of the Prussian Guards for his ruthless exposure of his men as well of his own person. Men who served under him remember him standing on the first step leading out of a trench a few seconds before zero hour, calmly smoking a cigarette, flicking his handmade riding boots with a whip, refusing a tin hat, and "going over the top" promptly, but without any sign of excitement.

But if not death, then glory. Von Bock knew that there was no future in trench warfare for an ambitious field officer, and though the way back to the General Staff in Berlin was barred he managed to get himself attached as First General Staff Officer to the 200th Infantry Division. This was a reserve division, in personnel not up exactly to the standards of the guards, and Von Bock did not feel at home. As a lecturing, hectoring regular, he was intensely disliked by the officers of the divisional staff, many of them from southern Germany, and though Von Bock's position in the division was unassailable because of his office, he suffered something like social isolation. It could not be otherwise with his acute sense of superiority. In his confidential reports to friends in Berlin he referred to his brother officers as "these part-time soldiers of Bavaria and Württemberg, with whom I have

now to associate myself." Even a German does not like being despised, not even by other Germans.

An appointment to the staff of the army group under the command of the Imperial crown prince came, therefore, as a great relief to Von Bock. Relations between the crown prince and Major von Bock were extremely cordial. Indeed, Major von Bock and the army group commander, heir to His Imperial Majesty, exchanged the familiar "*Du*" instead of the more formal "*Sie*" when addressing each other. Under the chief of staff of this army group, Count Frederick von der Schulenburg, Von Bock held the position of General Staff Officer IA.

The army group "*Kronprinz*" had made a high reputation for itself. Consisting of the best Regular Army formations and subsequently strengthened by the best reserve reinforcements, it was undoubtedly the strongest larger strategical unit in the entire German Army. In return for the strength given to it, much was expected; hence its excessive casualties, which were sometimes 20 to 30 per cent higher than in other army groups. The younger subaltern officers and the N.C.O.s and men did not speak kindly of their Imperial group commander and his staff, and were convinced that they were led by reckless and unskilled officers. Feeling ran high in that group, and only the strictest discipline prevented it from breaking asunder during the years of 1917-18.

Military history, however, corrects this judgment and shows that the tasks allotted to the group were such that no skill in the command could have avoided heavy losses.

For good or ill, the army group leader and his staff lived apart, even more remote mentally than physically from the critics under their command. They knew nothing of the criticism. What was more serious, just as this complacent, royally headed command ignored the world below it, so it was ignored from above.

When news of the pending armistice reached the staff of the army group "*Kronprinz*," the Crown Prince Wilhelm, his chief of staff, and his General Staff officers, it was a shock for which

they were completely unprepared. They were incredulous. So far from reality was Von Bock in his egotism that he had the same evening reported to the crown prince that he had been insulted in the open street by a private soldier. In much the same state of mind he stepped from his place in an effort to prevent the Kaiser's abdication. When later, in the headquarters of the High Command of the Imperial German armed forces, Field Marshal von Hindenburg and Generals Ludendorff, Groener, and Heye had persuaded the Kaiser, as supreme commander of the German Army, to abdicate and to escape to Holland, Major von Bock reported to his chief of staff, General Graf von der Schulenburg, and informed him that the general and the crown prince had been asked urgently to report to the High Command in Spa in order to attempt to persuade the Kaiser to resist. Von Bock managed to create the impression that this order had come from Von Hindenburg and his generals as a last-minute effort to bring the Kaiser back to his senses, as Von Bock put it. As is known, this was a complete distortion of the truth.

The Crown Prince Wilhelm writes in his memoirs (*Erinnerungen des Kronprinzen Wilhelm*. Rotta'sche Buchhandlung, Stuttgart & Berlin, 1923, p. 294):

During the night of the 8-9th November General Count von der Schulenburg was ordered by telephone by Major von Stülpnagel to Spa for the 9th November. Major von Bock received this order. Reasons why Count von der Schulenburg ought to go and who wanted to talk to him were not given.

As soon as this telephone order was handed to the chief of staff, the crown prince and Count von der Schulenburg hurried to Spa, where they arrived on November 9 to the surprise of Hindenburg and his staff. The crown prince immediately tried to persuade his father to resist the abdication plan and to lead back part of the retreating army, which was still loyal to him. Von Hindenburg was not long in getting rid of the crown prince, and events took their well-known course.

It is with Von Bock's little effort that we are concerned. His

views are now known. He thought that if the German Army was forced to admit that it had lost the war against the Allies it could at least attempt to win a second war, a civil war inside Germany. He thought at that time that it would have been easy to come to terms with the Allies through their fear of Communist and Socialist disorder in Germany. Von Bock was early with the Bolshevik "bogey."

There had never been a telephone call from the High Command, and the presence of the crown prince was not only not wanted but highly disturbing. Because Von Bock was a die-hard in a lost cause as well as a professional die-hard in the Army, he went on looking for some way out, when those who knew best had recognized that Germany was defeated, and it was like him to give no thought to the people at home or the men under his command. If the predominance of his caste and the existence of the old order would have been secured by civil war, he would have trained his guns on any town in revolt without counting the cost in human suffering.

His self-appointed mission to Spa had no sanction in any code of discipline, but it was a new revelation of Von Bock himself. His brother officers read in it personal ambition alone, and thought it gave a new and merely personal meaning to his high-falutin death or glory patriotic speeches. They went so far as to say that Von Bock was little concerned even about the Imperial regime in November 1918, its maintenance and its survival, but that he suddenly saw himself as the savior of an existing order that would bring him into the limelight. He so adroitly adapted himself to the new turn of events, however, that only a year later, in 1919, he was again in an official position, employed as an active officer at the Army Peace Commission, which dealt with the question of general demobilization and the re-establishment of nucleus formations for a new army of the Republic of Weimar—the Reichswehr. So he stood by the cradle of the new army that was to develop so formidably twenty years later.

To an outside world this army commission mainly dealt with demobilization and the breaking up of the framework of the

old Imperial Army. The commission liked to compare itself with the receiver in bankruptcy. There was, however, another side to its activities, and in this Major von Bock played a strong hand. It was understood that the army of 100,000 men permitted by the Treaty of Versailles would receive the immediate attention of this commission. Von Bock went further than that. He evolved a method of illegal recruitment that was designed to raise the strength of the Army beyond the prescribed 100,000.

This was known as "*Kruempferformation*," an expression borrowed from the time when Prussia was trying to raise a new army against Napoleon after the defeats of Jena and Auerstadt in 1806 and 1807. It implied that with a limited army a mass of recruits would pass through for short service. The Treaty of Versailles had provided that the professional soldiers of the 100,000-man army would have to serve twelve years, officers for twenty-four years. When the flagrant breach of the treaty became too obvious it was Von Bock who worked on the establishment of full military formations that did not appear official at all but which, without having an official appearance, were at times stronger than the regular Reichswehr.

All this was distinct from the many so-called free corps which at this time were springing up in Germany like mushrooms, promoted either by the government or some right-wing nationalistic group.

On the completion of this, which was fundamental in Germany's concealed rearmament, Von Bock was appointed chief of staff of the Third Military District (Berlin) in 1920, and held this position until 1923. In this capacity he looked after the illegal Reichswehr formations east of Berlin, where the chief recruiting districts of the main garrison establishment were located. At first he camouflaged the existence of these illegal Black Reichswehr formations so successfully that they escaped the attention of the Inter-Allied Commission of Military Control. With arms and munitions he was less successful. In November 1921 there was discovered at the Rockstroh Works at Heide-

nau, in Saxony, an enormous quantity of artillery and other machinery that should have been destroyed long before. The Treaty of Versailles allowed the German Army eighty-four guns—that is, twenty-one batteries of 10.5 howitzers. In Heidenau alone, six hundred howitzers were now discovered, besides 342 breechblocks and other components of howitzers. Beneath the flooring of the works, hidden in good condition, were five rifling machines, important for the construction of guns. These machines could not easily be replaced.

At this period, too, in two rooms of the Spandau arsenal near Berlin, secretly stored documents were piled up to the ceiling. In these documents the Berlin military district retained the names of artillery engineers and specialists for further service. When the Inter-Allied Control Commission had the existence of these papers reported to them and opened an investigation, they asked the German Government to put armed guards in front of these two rooms. When the commission arrived the rooms were empty. The sentry on guard was sentenced to six days' confinement in barracks, but two months later the same man was promoted to sergeant major by the chief of staff of the Third Military District, Lieutenant Colonel von Bock.

In January 1922 the Inter-Allied Commission of Military Control announced that, despite the cache of material found in Heidenau, 120 officers and 230 men would leave the commission, whose Dresden center would completely disappear. A report published by the commission on disarmament in Bavaria showed that the so-called Citizens' Force had handed some of their rifles over, but the majority had smuggled them to Austria, especially to the Tyrol, where they were kept for the happy day when Allied control people should have left Bavaria, and they could be handed back to their original Bavarian owners.

The decrease in strength of the Inter-Allied Commission was a great relief to the chief of staff of the Third Military District, Von Bock, because at the beginning this commission had effectively curtailed Von Bock's illegal reserves in war material. According to the report of Lieutenant Colonel Guinness in May

1923, then Under-Secretary of State for War in the British Government, the German Government had voluntarily surrendered to the commission:

33,550 guns (with barrels)
38,107,604 shells
11,616 trench mortars
87,950 machine guns
4,560,861 small arms
459,903,800 rifle ammunition

Material destroyed before the Allied Control Commission was established, according to this report, amounted to:

8,618 guns
6,220,311 shells
2,635 trench mortars
6,004 machine guns
580,395 small arms
31,960,000 rifle ammunition

This material was said to have been destroyed under the supervision of German authorities, and for that reason the figures are open to question.

The Allied Control Commission discovered the following material and had it destroyed:

63 guns complete
7 trench mortars
840 machine guns
43,380 small arms
6,927,496 rifle ammunition

In a reply to Sir William Davison (M.P. for South Kensington) Lieutenant Colonel Guinness said that there were at that time 150,000 police in Germany, armed to the extent of one rifle to three men, one revolver per man, and 340 machine guns and 150 armored cars for the entire force.

In camouflaging the number of personnel and the budget authorizing the pay of these men, Von Bock seemed to be at

first more successful. His chief henchman was a certain retired Major Buchrucker. The broader public first learned of the existence of these illegal formations—which ran officially under the name of Labor Companies—in the year 1923, when Major Buchrucker thought that the time to assert their right to existence had come. He staged a sort of a putsch, which had for its object the seizure of the fortress of Kuestrin, Von Bock's birthplace. The little coup failed. The Reichswehr tried by every means to hush up the incident, because publicity would tend to tear aside the veil of legal appearance with which the Reichs Government and its Reichswehr Ministry tried to surround itself in front of the Allies and other foreign governments.

For four years Von Bock successfully held his position as chief of staff and carried on his undercover activities. In 1924 the Reichswehr Ministry thought it prudent to replace him and to put him in charge of the Second Battalion of the Infantry Regiment No. 4 at Kolberg in Pomerania. The commander in chief of the Reichswehr, Colonel General Hans von Seeckt, did not like to have in high responsible positions officers who had made the mistake of permitting the public to know anything about the illegal activities of the regular armed forces of the Republic. But exposure was to come.

While the Reichswehr authorities had managed too well to keep the existence of these formations hidden from the eye of the Allies, they had acted without ruth in their treatment of some of the volunteers serving in the Black Reichswehr. From the year 1926 a whole series of law actions brought by aggrieved men against the Reichswehr Ministry disclosed the treacherous activities of Von Bock and his friends.

On January 31, 1926, the so-called Feme murder trials started. Feme was the organization employed to purge the Black Reichswehr of volunteers who showed a disposition to inform the Inter-Allied Commission of the existence of their battalions, or to complain of them to left-wing party politicians, who might at any time use the information to embarrass the Republican Government. The Feme was composed of several officers,

N.C.O.s, and men who during the years 1920-23 had staged "court-martials," under whose verdicts they killed a number of people. The head of the German Government, Reichskanzler Dr. Stresemann, a Democrat, and Reichswehr Minister Dr. Gessler, also a Democrat, feared that an open trial of these militarist criminals would excite the suspicious attention of the treaty powers.

A case was opened against officers of the "Regiment von Senden," namely Baron von Senden himself, Captain Gutknecht and the members of this regiment, Aschenkamp, Stein, Schirrmann, and another officer, Lieutenant Benn, who were accused of having murdered Private Soldier Panier. After two days' hearing of the charges Baron von Senden and Captain Gutknecht were acquitted, Aschenkamp, Stein, Schirrmann were condemned to death, and Lieutenant Benn was condemned to death as an accessory. During these trials the Reichswehr authorities insisted that the murdered soldier, Private Panier, should be referred to in official records as the Baker Panier, his former occupation, thus trying to give the whole matter a civilian color. None of the sentences were ever executed.

In November 1926 another case started, against the illegal garrison of the Fortress of Kuestrin, where Von Bock's personal friend Buchrucker had been in command. The Reichswehr authorities attempted to deny responsibility or even knowledge of the case, but their efforts were not perfectly arranged and "indiscretions" committed by the Minister of the Reichswehr himself helped to give the game away.

Here are some highlights in this exposure:

Lieutenant Janke, a member of Buchrucker's force, believed that he had been poisoned because it had been discovered by Buchrucker that he had sold a certain amount of rifle ammunition to left-wing party formations. Lieutenant Buchholtz and the N.C.O.s, Thom and Rathmann, were accused. Colonel Gudovius, who commanded the Kuestrin district in 1923, was called on to give evidence. The court tried to force him to disclose full information on the subject of the existence of these

illegal formations in his district, but the colonel successfully asserted his right to refuse to answer on the ground that state security was involved.

At one point Lieutenant Buchholtz tried his utmost to establish the legal character of the formation in which he was serving, affirming that he was acting under the orders of his superior officers. Here is the record:

Lieutenant Buchholtz: "When I enlisted I asked whether the Black Reichswehr was connected with the official army. It was admitted that it was, and I enlisted."

Colonel Gudovius at once rose and said: "The statement of the accused that the Black Reichswehr was connected with the Regular Army is a danger to the security of the state, and may have the worst possible effect upon relations with foreign countries."

Buchholtz himself further disclosed that high officers of the Reichswehr, among them Von Bock, had given him and his colleagues instructions how to act in emergency: they were directed to march against Poland. Finally Thom and Rathmann were sentenced to two years' imprisonment and Lieutenant Buchholtz to one month's imprisonment.

The chief responsibility for all these illegalities rested upon the shoulders of Von Bock and Major Buchrucker. Von Bock had taken special leave and was watching anxiously the result of the trials.

The next case was against Sergeant Major Klapproth, for attempted murder of Corporal Ghaedicke. Lieutenant Schultz was accused of instigation, Lieutenant Heines of complicity. This time Major Buchrucker could not keep out of court, and Von Bock managed to appear only as a witness for the Reichswehr. During the proceedings Major Buchrucker, in an effort to clear himself, asserted that the Minister of the Reichswehr, Herr Gessler, had made a statement in the presence of Buchrucker's solicitor in which he had said:

"Major Buchrucker had destroyed the carefully and laboriously built up system of defense in the east of Germany, and

had caused the Fatherland incalculable damage which could not be repaired."

This evidence appeared in documentary form. Buchrucker managed to drag Von Bock into the court, who, as "an expert for the Army," made the following statement:

"The men [Buchrucker and his Black Reichswehr formation] could feel themselves to be soldiers."

During the hearing it came out that the fortress had been frequently visited by officers of the Inter-Allied Commission, and that on such occasions all the billets of the Black Reichswehr "had to be cleared of the last straw within twenty minutes"—Lieutenant Heines's recorded statement about conditions at Fort Tchernow.

In the end Sergeant Major Klapproth was sentenced to one year's imprisonment, while all officers were acquitted. But the cases had to be reopened in February 1928, when Schultz and Klapproth were given fifteen years' imprisonment each and Major Buchrucker one year's imprisonment.

Another case was that against the ill-famed Lieutenant Heines (later famous for his activities as police president of Breslau and storm-trooper general after Hitler had taken over) and Lieutenant Rossbach and five others who were accused of murdering one of their comrades, Willie Schmidt, who had tried to inform officers of the Inter-Allied Commission of the existence of these formations. The question was raised whether the Army recognized the Rossbach Brigade as part of its organization. The witnesses for the regular Reichswehr, Colonel Kaldrack, Lieutenant Colonel von Schleicher (who in 1932 became head of the government and was one of the most influential personalities in the Reichswehr Ministry and in the government), and Von Bock stated in evidence that the Reichswehr had nothing whatever to do with illegal formations. While this evidence was being given, one of the accused, Baron von Bodungen, had a heated argument with the Reichswehr witnesses which severely exposed Kaldrack, Von Schleicher, and Von Bock. Here is a passage from the court records:

Baron von Bodungen: "Herr Judge, I should like to explain why the colonel's [Kaldrack] memory is so bad. I had a talk with him in the corridor last Friday, and he said to me: 'Yes, we do consider the men of the Rossbach Brigade soldiers, but I cannot say that in court.'"

Colonel Kaldrack (jumping to his feet, his face red with anger): "Oh! Oh! Oh! Bodungen!"

Baron von Bodungen: "Ask Lieutenant Schultz, who was with me."

The Judge: "Now come here, Herr Lieutenant."

But Lieutenant Schultz stood up calmly and declared that Baron von Bodungen was right. The colonel now went purple and shouted hysterically:

"I have been for thirty-four years in the Army. Everybody must admit that I have always served faithfully. I have taken an oath. Is this done to get me on thin ice? No officer fights like that!"

During this scene Von Bock sat with beads of perspiration running down his face. He knew that Colonel Kaldrack's military career would now come to an end, and if any such accusing questions should be put to him his own career would be cut short. Yet Von Bock, who as chief of staff to the Third Military District was the chief instigator of the circumstances leading to the trial, got away free.

In July 1929 a number of illegal officers were released by a sympathetic Mecklenburgian Government. Even the Prussian Government of the Republic was extremely lenient with them. These men had been shown to be the murderers of their own comrades, yet they were able to go at once to Berlin, where the same year, in the great Sports Palace, five thousand Berliners welcomed them as "patriotic heroes." One after another they appeared on the stage and were received with clapping and hurrahs. Inside and outside public attention had been excited by these national and international scandals, but the public sentiment of Germany as a whole was with the criminals. How otherwise could Von Bock have had the audacity to sue in court a number of pacifist writers, among them the well-known Karl von Ossietzky, who was later tortured to death in a concentra-

tion camp under the Hitler Government. In the case against these writers, Von Bock gave evidence, and when asked whether he had taken part or intended to take part in any of the putsches and rebellions of the year 1923 he answered with an expression of complete evasive arrogance: "But why? The whole thing was completely hopeless."

With this record Von Bock could remain in the Regular Army, be promoted to full colonel of the 4th Infantry Regiment in Kolberg, and in February 1929 become major general and commander of the crack First Cavalry Division in Frankfurt-an-der-Oder. He could even add to his laurels the halo of a martyr who had been dragged into court for the patriotism he had shown during the early years of the Reichswehr.

These facts, incredible to those who even now believe it possible to separate the German nation and its history from Hitler and the Nazis, are incontestable, and they are vital to an understanding of postwar Germany. For it is just because these things were not believed to be possible by those who dominated the Peace Conference of 1919 and influenced the loose application of the Treaty of Versailles that a second World War was prepared while we slept.

Many higher Reichswehr officers lost their rank and position during these trials. If Von Bock survived, it was by the mental agility by which he obscured himself when danger threatened eminence. The only way in which any court in Germany could get hold of the regular army officers in connection with this unsavory business was by calling upon them to give authoritative or expert evidence. In any other country every one of these officers, Von Bock perhaps the first, would have been convicted as accessories in these grave offenses and stripped of their uniforms. The court proceedings prove that Von Bock and many others, but Von Bock especially, thought lightly of the oath of allegiance and loyalty which they had sworn to the Weimar Republic. In every case it was made clear that Von Bock, as one of the chief promoters of crimes of violence and international fraud, farcically treated by the law courts of the German

Republic, was a confirmed perjurer, conscious of concealed forces at his back.

In Germany the conventional standards of rectitude and justice have always been adaptable to the needs and desires of the army caste. The criminal code contained many a clause under which Von Bock could have been convicted. That none were invoked against him means that men more eminent than he in the Army and the state countenanced what he did, if they did not direct it. The Weimar Republic was little less under the influence of the militarists than its predecessors.

During that time the man known to the world as Adolf Hitler was nothing but an unsuccessful little politician who still had to reinstate himself after a light prison sentence for high treason, but already, as he has said, noting contemptuously his triumph over authorities without the firmness to hang him. Germany was officially governed by Democrats and Social Democrats. Unofficially the strings were pulled effectively by the Army.

In 1930 Major Buchrucker wrote a book called *In Seeckt's Shadow*, in which he disclosed that he had a formal pact with Von Bock, chief of staff of the Third Military District in Berlin. Evidence against Von Bock was piled high in this book, but the law courts and the public conveniently took no notice.

We return now to Von Bock's military career. Seasoned in political struggle, experienced as a General Staff officer, he concentrated during subsequent years on his field appointment as battalion commander and later as regimental chief of the 4th Regimental Infantry in Kolberg. The disciplinary standards of the regular Reichswehr were high and harsh. Its man power and material was of the first order; the officers knew their profession, but Von Bock managed to shine. The 4th Infantry Regiment has never forgotten his command. To reach a level of training above that of sister regiments Von Bock employed, up to 1929 and including that year, methods that can be paralleled only by those elaborated later in the Gestapo. As regimental commander he donned civilian clothes and hid in forests and

fields to inspect in the guise of a casual onlooker the training of his company and battalion commanders.

The requirements of the regulations during maneuvers were not only enforced to the letter but very often exceeded. His troops made route marches with their tin hats on, with their arms shouldered, and with every added exertion that a strict disciplinarian can impose. The number of suicides in his regiment mounted. All received a baptism of Von Bock's special "*Weltanschauung*." Day after day, week after week, officers and men were lectured upon their privilege of belonging to the armed forces of the Republic at a time when many more young Germans, eager to volunteer, were denied this privilege because of armament restrictions. It was as though he sought to justify the extraordinary exertions demanded from his men.

The effect upon his subordinates varied. At first the majority of the officers laughed at him, then became discontented without showing their feeling to him, but a small minority believed in what he said and strove to imitate him. These faithful ones were nicknamed inside the Reichswehr "Bock's own deathboys." His pet slogan was borrowed from a soldier's song with a refrain meaning: "No finer death than to be slain and shot as a soldier in front of the enemy."

The Reichswehr Ministry took note of the stern regimental commander and drew two favorable conclusions. The first was that after the severe lesson of the Feme murder cases Von Bock was a reformed character and would never dabble in internal or external politics again; the second was that he would obey orders strictly as he expected his own to be obeyed by his subordinates. His reward was a transfer from the 4th Infantry, in the command of which the former guardsman felt himself to be degraded. In Germany such a regiment carries none of the tradition of wealth and social prestige under which a crack guards or cavalry unit of the old Imperial Army swaggered over all, even other German officers and soldiers. He was given command of the 1st Cavalry Division, where again he felt he was in a circle appropriate to his standing. Then he took over Military

District II in Stettin with the rank of Lieutenant General in 1931, a position which he held up till 1935 and which ultimately gave him the rank of commanding general.

Here, in the capital of Pomerania, Von Bock went through the time of tension which preceded and followed the advent of Hitler as head of the state. In a conservative Junker circle, remote in feeling from Berlin, the commanding general could count upon willing acceptance of his authority and his views, outside the military sphere as within it. In all this, Berlin, though only eighty miles from his headquarters, left him untouched. He was well aware of the struggle for power going on below the surface between the Reichswehr and the Nazi party. He had no part in it; his side was going to be that which won. If the Nazi party could bring into being an enlarged army, which should mean more power for himself, they were his men and their commander in chief was his. On the other hand, Hitler and the political leaders saw Von Bock only as a soldier without interest in politics. They reckoned correctly that the results of his enthusiasm in the late twenties had been more than enough to keep him in his place.

So far Von Bock, as commanding general, had shown that he was a man able to handle civilians satisfactorily in the Prussian sense (not equally acceptable further west), he was a thoroughly experienced staff officer, and his known character as a disciplinarian was all in his favor. A far more important test was now to come.

He had to prove his ability as organizer of the new German Army. Von Fritsch, Von Rundstedt, Von Leeb, and others were already fully engaged in bringing into effect the plans drawn up ten or twelve years before. But Von Bock was no Moses: for such work he had no gift. He contributed no ideas; he was at a loss when called upon to make suggestions for improvements in the plans of rearmament. It is not enough to say, as "Bock's own deathboys" said, that he had only a slight share in planning and organizing the expansion of the Army. He had no part in it at all.

Meantime the antagonism between the National Socialist Cabinet and certain high officers of the Reichswehr drew to a climax. The demands by Von Fritsch and others for prerogative kept pace with the increase of the armed forces. Not content with their responsibilities and powers over the Army, they held that in order to bring to its highest pitch the striking power of the national forces they must be able to intervene in political administration when and where they deemed it necessary.

Hitler, seeing in these pretensions a threat to his own supremacy and that of the Nazi party, pressed a demand that Von Bock be given the command of the newly formed Army Group III in Saxony's capital of Dresden. To this appointment the Reichswehr leaders had no objection. Von Bock had not been conspicuous for his strong pro-Nazi inclinations, though he had not shown any partisanship with the Reichswehr leaders, but in the minds of these leaders he was a professional soldier of recognized qualifications for the training of such a group. This appointment would be governed by much the same considerations as that of the general commanding the forces of occupation in Austria, a command which now fell to him as head of Army Group III.

There were, however, political dangers in the assumption by the National Socialist Government of the responsibility for the selection of the man in command of the first military occupation of a country outside Germany. For the first time the Army was called upon to execute a large job which necessarily included difficult political administration. At any time the Reichswehr could create an "incident" that would have allowed them to keep in their hands permanently the power vested in them for this occasion. It was under such a menace to his supremacy that Hitler had broken Von Fritsch and the most dangerous of his entourage, and he could strike as hard again. But there was a limit to ruthlessness in dealing with army chiefs, and he knew how to play possum while giving time for one scandal to be forgotten.

Besides all this, the switch over in Austria would have been

carried out more smoothly on the military side by a man with the prestige of the old Prussian military caste. Von Bock's contempt for everything Austrian had been spread about in epigrammatic gibes. His three or four Austrian war decorations were "that scrap iron." Officers of the Austrian Army were expected to be overawed by his haughty and domineering manners. It was here that Von Bock played his role too well, and it seemed that suddenly he was going to re-embark upon internal politics.

Hermann Goering had entered Austria as German Air Minister, and on arriving had established himself with the pomp and display he considered appropriate. As a member of the Reich Government he was in a position to invite Von Bock to parades, but his invitations were declined without even a pretense of politeness. In physique the opposite of Goering, Von Bock's purposeful asceticism constituted a silent reproof to Goering's Falstaffian appearance and habits. When the two men were compelled to be together at official meetings there was no harmonious collaboration between them. Von Bock's manners were not improved by his desire to impress his new Austrian subordinates with a German general's precedence over any civilian, even though, like Goering, the civilian be Minister for Air and had been a lieutenant in the Air Force.

So it came about that the working of the military *gleichschaltung* (which may be translated as co-ordination with as much force as is necessary) was left to Colonel Rommel, and Von Bock returned to Dresden to take charge of the forces that occupied the second zone (north) of Czechoslovakia. He was accompanied on his entry into the Sudetenland by his then nine-year-old son, wearing a sailor suit with beret. He wished to impress the little boy, as he told foreign pressmen, with "the beauty and exhilaration of soldiering." Beyond soldiering, Von Bock, like so many of his Prussian kind, was a closed mind. His experiences, which had not been without foreign contacts as during the juggling of rearmament during the formal treaty period of disarmament, had not taught him the mental flexibility

needed in diplomacy. He issued a proclamation which he read out from the balcony of the Town Hall in Friedland in which he said:

"Sudeten Germans—Racial Comrades, the hour of deliverance has come. German troops are on the point of taking your land under the protection and sovereignty of the Reich . . . Let everyone go to his work. Let each in his place co-operate in production as soon as possible."

Learning nothing from the feverish activities of Von Ribbentrop and scores of other Nazi officials, including Hitler, in disguising their burglarious schemes, Von Bock threw off the mask and exposed Germany's object: the acquisition by fraud and force, by bloodshed if necessary, of the Czech armament industry and other sources of production. The Sudeten Germans were just the worm on the hook.

The subsequent purges that affected almost every larger formation of the Reichswehr did not affect Von Bock. On the contrary, he got a step higher, being put in charge of the most important army group inside the German Army, Group I at Berlin. The reasons for this change were basically the same as those which made the German Cabinet appoint him group commander of Group III. For the Nazi party he was a tamed Prussian of the old military order. Party confidence in him had even been strengthened by his noncommittal attitude during the fateful days early in 1938 when Von Fritsch thought that the scales of political fortune might be tipped in favor of the Reichswehr. Many of the other group commanders were changed; so was the chief of the General Staff. Von Bock's advance was taken in the Army as a sign that he had taken over the role of an "internal quisling." However, people who knew the exact circumstances which led to this appointment and to his survival in the forces would ascribe this role more positively to General Wilhelm Keitel. If Von Bock passively accepted party domination, Keitel actively supported it. Von Bock's attitude was correct, and acceptable to the government. He paid enough

lip service to the party in his addresses to troops to avoid being considered lukewarm.

At the beginning of the campaign against Poland he led the army group from the north invading Poland from East Prussia. The operations in Poland illustrate Von Bock's limitations. Had he not, in co-operation with the commander in chief, Von Brauchitsch, called in Von Rundstedt and Von Leeb, the determined Polish resistance would have been more difficult to break. The swift and complete German success was due to Von Rundstedt's circumspect plans and their execution and not to the mediocre handling of the northern army group of Von Bock.

In the campaign in the west Von Bock was the commander in chief of Army Group B and directed the thrust against the Lower Somme. Throughout the Polish and French campaigns Von Bock's exploits were not conspicuous. He held a high command, and the progress of the forces under that command was made possible to a large extent by the extraordinary feats of his colleagues. He was nothing but a number among many abler men. In the Russian campaign he was more severely tested and his deficiencies more exposed. He commanded the central body of corps and groups that struck the first blows. In the north and south his more gifted colleagues had synchronized their operations with the progress which Von Bock made.

It may surprise a military observer, after learning about Von Bock's past career, that he was entrusted with a task upon which the fate of the entire campaign depended. He had spectacular successes that missed the strategical goal of the entire German plan. After heavy frontier battles on each side of the Polish Pripet Marshes, and after the subsequent advance of both wing groups in the north and in the south, Von Bock advanced again and again until he arrived in front of Moscow. It is now established that the German High Command never intended to fight any violent battle in front of Moscow, but relied on the ability of the man in command of the central groups to bring about decisive battles of annihilation against the Red armies that would finish the war even before Smolensk was captured. Whether

through the ability of the Russian leaders or the limitations of Von Bock, the German plan broke down. Von Bock conquered geography but not the Russian armies.

Perhaps the German commander in chief of that time, Von Brauchitsch, and the chief of the German General Staff, Halder, thought that their presence immediately behind the headquarters of the leader of the central army groups would ensure success. Perhaps already the hand of the civilian Hitler had made itself felt by his fear of entrusting this crucial task to a more capable man—Von Rundstedt, for example—whose success might give the victor in the field too much glory and publicity. The fact remains that Von Bock alone led the German armies and that his early operations in 1941 created later a general situation that had never been foreseen by the planners in the German Reichswehr Ministry and against which the exponents of German military thought had uttered warnings since the days of Clausewitz.

Confronted with the alternative of retiring into winter positions or making a bold all-out effort, the German High Command, led by Von Brauchitsch and Halder and supported by a representative group of senior officers, advised the prudent course. The supreme commander, Adolf Hitler, insisted on attack. Von Bock remained in charge of the central group and set about executing a strategy that will be known in history as the period when "intuition" was dominant in war.

Hitler had picked a man who needed the direction of a master of strategy. The ideal directing brain would have been Baron Werner von Fritsch, who had been dead for two years, murdered near Warsaw; the best substitute would have been Gerd von Rundstedt, who was now temporarily relieved of his command in the south; failing these, the combination of men that had been largely responsible for the direction against Poland, France, the Balkans, and Russia—Von Brauchitsch and Halder—would have been the next best substitute. These last were the best that could be achieved at that time, when the National Socialist Government had had still to keep watch on the internal

political facts. The combination Hitler-Von Bock was about the worst for Germany that could be formed, and its existence contributed substantially to the shortening of this war and the certainty of an Allied victory.

During the Battle of Moscow, Von Bock's mediocrity encountered the brilliancy of the Soviet marshal, Zhukov, who, when surrounded by Von Bock's assault forces in a semicircle from north to south of Moscow, and faced with strong pressure in the center of this arc, knew how to exploit the "inner line" formed by Moscow's system of communications. When the battle ended in complete defeat for the German armies, and the beginning of a Napoleonic retreat through Russia in the winter of 1941-42, Gerd von Rundstedt, recalled at the last moment, stopped the rout. With the assistance of List he directed a disengagement action that, though it cost the German forces enormous casualties, did restore the situation. Von Bock went on sick leave with "stomach trouble," developed very opportunely. He was injured to hardship and had been known throughout his career for his iron constitution.

The German attempt to regain the initiative on a large scale, and to seek a decision in the east before the increasing might of the western democracies could come into play, resulted in the German plan for the Battle of Stalingrad. Though an Allied invasion from the west was not likely at that time, Hitler sent his best man to the west to guard against it, for there were unknown potentialities in the hostile populations of the occupied countries. Von Rundstedt took over the combined German forces in Holland, Belgium, and France. Then Von Bock again appeared in the limelight of eastern operations, greatly to the surprise of everyone who had followed his career and understood his military caliber.

We are still in the period of intuition that started in the last German assault on Moscow and was now running loose during this 1942 offensive. With Field Marshal von Brauchitsch retired, Field Marshal von Leeb replaced, Field Marshal von Rundstedt engaged in the distant theater of western Europe, Von Bock

alone remained to advise the Führer, who as commander in chief held all the strings in his hands. Only a man of the limited strategical conceptions of Von Bock could have advised any commander in chief to split the German assault force while operations were half through in order to attack the Caucasus while the Battle of Stalingrad was raging. This dispersion of power flouted the established and tested rules of strategy. But if this campaign revealed the untrained directive of a lance corporal, it also revealed in its execution a man who did not know the value of human life. The blood bath through which the German armed forces went was of Von Bock's making, and it is not too severe to conclude that his sense of responsibility was replaced by fanatical satisfaction in assisting his men to "crown a soldier's life by a glorious death in the field."

It is important to distinguish between Von Bock and the so-called "intuition advocates," generals on the immediate and personal staff of Hitler. Von Bock was far more the professional soldier than Generals Jodl, Warlimont, and their kind. There is no doubt that in normal times Von Bock would have made his name as a subordinate general. Given responsibility beyond his capacity, and, even worse, called upon to advise a civilian with supreme political and military power who overnight thought he had become a strategist, Von Bock's leadership was disastrous for the armies under his command.

VIII

Grand Admiral Karl Doenitz

*I will demonstrate that the U-boat can win this war—alone.
For us there is no impossible. Doenitz.*

Karl Doenitz hails from Mecklenburg, the province which produces men and women only less stolid and phlegmatic than the isolated Pomeranian. He has nothing of the typical characteristics of his country, but he is anxious to have it believed that his family is one of "shipowners and landholders." He does not say "fishermen and farmers"—which would be nearer the truth, because that would expose his feeling of social inferiority. Not that Doenitz would pretend to stand with the upper class of the neighboring Prussian state; his idol is the "Nordic" type. He is not interested in vons and Freiherren, barons or Grafs, because they never forget that in Germany the Navy is always the junior service.

Born in 1892, Doenitz entered the Imperial German Navy in 1913 as an ensign, reporting to the captain of the light cruiser *Breslau* then attached to the German Mediterranean Squadron. After his brother officers had "looked him over," he was marked down as a bad sailor and as a worse officer. Slighting and sarcastic remarks made Doenitz frantic; "Doenitz, the Prussian landlubber," rankled in him as a double injury, Prussian and landlubber!

The *Breslau* made the dash to Constantinople in 1914 together with the *Goeben*, and then a long period of inactivity started for Doenitz and his friends. Doenitz has put out the story that as a young officer, ambitious and burning to see the enemy, he could

not be content with loafing about on the beautiful Pera beach. In fact, he could no longer stand the teasing from his brother officers. After the year 1916 he was almost a psychic case. On the few occasions when the German-Turkish squadron had gone into action he had shown that his nerves were not so steady as the German Naval Officer's code of honor required. Not that he ran away from his post or that he asked to be relieved. But his ashen face at the moment "action stations" was sounded did not escape notice. The "Prussian landlubber" became "yellow Doenitz!"

Pride came to his aid, and in order to stop the spread of such gibes he applied for transfer to the U-boat branch of the Imperial Navy. This was gladly granted because the British Navy was playing havoc with the U-boats by 1916, and replacements for U-boat commanders were daily needed, and—in contrast to Doenitz's own present orders—a transfer to the U-boats in the last war was quite voluntary.

Promotion was granted immediately, though to Doenitz's disappointment the second gold stripe did not reach him until after he had left Constantinople, and he was unable to parade this sign of official approval before his hecklers. An uneventful career started for him as commander of the small U-boat *U-25*. He was cautious, and despite a number of sorties he was hardly ever attacked. His claims to sinkings were therefore small. What interested Doenitz was the technical side of U-boat warfare. Machinery and hull construction were his pet studies. He sent a number of memoranda to the Admiralty, and so people of the highest rank became aware of a little first lieutenant. Reward followed, and he was given command of the larger "underwater cruiser" *UB-68*. Long cruises followed, and toward the end of the war Doenitz was back again in the Mediterranean. A few weeks before the Armistice Doenitz attacked a British convoy off Malta and was immediately engaged by a sloop and an armed trawler. Slowly the *UB-68* came to the surface, undamaged. Doenitz ordered "Abandon ship" without trying to use his gun which was of considerable caliber. If today any such incident be

reported to the present Grand Admiral Karl Doenitz, a court-martial would follow for the responsible officer with the heaviest sentence—which under these circumstances might be “To be shot at dawn for cowardice in face of the enemy.” Having scuttled his boat, Doenitz was fished out of the water and brought to a prison camp in England’s Lancashire.

In that prison camp Doenitz learned the news that Imperial Germany had sued for an armistice and that a republic was forming. He also knew that jobs would be scarce in a new German Republican Navy, especially for a man who might encounter former brother officers from the old *Breslau*. Meanwhile Doenitz sat in a Lancashire prison camp, and the best jobs were given away in his absence. Doenitz had to get out of the camp before anybody else, because if he left with the entire batch of imprisoned officers his chance of employment would be almost hopeless. Without wound or injury, what could he do? British prison-camp administration observed the rules of the Geneva Convention and looked after the officers so conscientiously that they were kept free from disease. There was only one way—to simulate lunacy. And that Karl Doenitz did—with peculiar success. His neurotic temperament gave him perverse inspiration, and he conceived and performed ridiculous acts of the special type that the alienist looks for in a demented patient. Doenitz was sent to Germany among the early releases.

Years later, when naval officers who had been with him in that prison camp heard that he was climbing higher and higher in rank, they were dumfounded. They had been themselves convinced that Doenitz was a lunatic. So surprised was a German naval doctor who had treated Doenitz during the period of supposed aberration that he refused to believe he had been deluded by a completely sane impostor. Confronted with the “returned-to-normal” Doenitz, he expressed his congratulations, but as soon as he had left Doenitz’s presence he turned to a companion and said: “It’s all very well. But you can say what you like, that man’s cowardice and egotism border on lunacy.” Such a mentality does not exclude faculties of cunning and calculation.

Republican Germany did not possess a submarine fleet. And much as certain naval circles would have liked to construct in secrecy "school samples" and to keep step with the rapid development of that engine of maritime war, the German Admiralty did not dare to break the clause of the Treaty of Versailles that forbade its construction. Doenitz was not disturbed by the restriction. At the writing desk and on the drawing board he developed new ideas without danger. Near Kiel a "school for anti-submarine warfare" was founded. This was in reality the school for submarine training for officers and men, but without boats the theoretical knowledge of the crews could not be tested. The school was the utmost concession the discreet Admiral Zenker made to his young firebrand officers. Doenitz gave no trouble of this kind to the admiral.

But desk work wins little promotion in the fighting services. Doenitz could not hope for higher rank—not to speak of flag rank—if there were no submarines. Before he could secure command of a submarine fleet and issue his orders from a cozy office in Berlin or some Baltic Sea port there must be a government in Berlin that would give him that fleet in defiance of the treaty powers. Such a government was possible only under a Hitler. And Doenitz so reasoned on the basis of a little recent history. Doenitz knew that Goering was experimenting with the vision of a large air fleet as soon as Hitler (who was already his Führer, if not yet the nation's) could take over the Cabinet. Doenitz also knew of Erhard Milch's ambitious preparations for the same purpose. Was it not conceivable that Doenitz could hitch his wagon to the rising star in a parallel scheme? Had not the all-knowing, all-promising Hitler himself announced that "if only the last war had lasted another two years the U-boats alone would have forced England to her knees"? Doenitz was gradually attaining rank higher than that of the average operational submarine commander; it was high time that U-boats were afloat again. He was tired of the cautious attitude of Admiral Raeder, sick of hearing that the Republican Government had trouble enough to fulfill the demand of the Reichswehr without

listening to those of the crazy submarine people. These explanations had been like music in his ears while there was still a chance that he would have to take over command of one of those nasty boats. Now his personal outlook was different.

Doenitz's sponsor for entry into the Nazi party was the enterprising Hermann Goering. They became close friends. Goering's bulk did not present a heroic spectacle aboard ship (he is violently seasick in the slightest swell), but as a Nazi he was worth cultivating. And Goering was interested enough to see that already Doenitz was nursing a severe grievance founded upon jealousy that made him unbearable to subordinates and superiors alike. As a junior officer he had been glad to save his own skin; as a commander he welcomed the fate that put him into a drawing office; when he could see himself becoming a flag officer he wanted all or nothing, though he was still only a commander. But the so-called revolution worked fast in those days, though always dodging recognition of its far-reaching purpose. One year more, and—in 1933—Commander Doenitz received official sanction to carry on his tests in public and to search German industry for factories that could produce the first submarines.

The commander in chief of the German Navy, Raeder, was unaware that the submarine specialist was secretly starting a campaign against him. Only one who had himself been hoisted to his position by intrigue could have suspected that a simple commander was talking to flag officers, insinuating that Raeder ought to be pensioned off because he laid too much emphasis on the construction of surface vessels. Soon, with the gradual expansion of the German Navy and the mushroom development of the submarine branch, the question that came into view with its origin concealed was: Should the officer who had done research work for years on end remain head of the branch and gradually attain highest rank, or should a tested and experienced admiral—even though not a submarine specialist—take over and apply to the branch his wider knowledge and larger experience of responsibility. There was no doubt, as Doenitz knew, that world-wide historical practice was on the side of Raeder, but the

climber was pulling party strings long before Raeder knew that the toils of the Nazis were gathering round the hitherto sacred Army and Navy. So whenever he suggested to Hitler the name of a head for the submarine branch of the German Navy, the Führer—for the purpose of evasion—suggested that pleasant and smiling Captain Doenitz (as he had now become) ought to carry on. It had pleased the Führer much to see how nicely that important branch was coming along. And Raeder paid for his dignity, avoiding a troublesome dispute by acquiescence.

February 1936 was the great month for Doenitz. He pressed successfully a demand that was substantial: the "*Führer der Unterseeboote*" should be directly responsible to the commander in chief of the Navy and to no one else. This meant for Doenitz unlimited power in his branch. He ordered promotion, he demanded monies, he demanded shore expansion for his bases, he reported directly to the commander in chief, and nobody else would know what he was doing unless he gave explicit permission. A commander in chief in the full exercise of his function does not tolerate such pretensions, but Raeder still acquiesced. He had seen the red light and sensed the intrigue against him. The only satisfaction he could get was the limiting of the appointment of Doenitz to the command of the First Submarine Flotilla (*Weddigen Flotilla*) which at first was entirely an experimental force.

During the Spanish Civil War, Doenitz repeatedly ordered maneuvers designed to show what the modern submarine could do against a protected convoy of merchantmen. The result was meager. The submarines reported failure. Doenitz, who up to that time had been responsible chiefly for technical development, had now to take up tactics and their evolution. The forerunners of the "wolf-pack attacks" were tried out, and still there was no marked success. Doenitz went further. In his new studies it came to light that the naval charts at his disposal were not too good for submarines, and, whether intentionally (as was not unlikely for obvious reasons) or not, the special charts of the British naval

base of Portland were particularly bad. Much against his inclination Doenitz had to board one of his own submarines, the *U-37*, and take to sea. Off Portland the German submarine started investigations within territorial waters. It was in peacetime, but the British Navy was not sleeping. The destroyer *Wolfhound* noticed something, and to scare the foreign sub to the surface dropped practice depth charges and made other searching maneuvers, which sounded so terrifying that Doenitz ordered his commander to surface. The commander of the *U-37* made the right apologies, and the incident was closed as far as the British were concerned. For Doenitz, however, the incident had bad consequences. While the *Wolfhound* practice depth charges went off he was seized with the notion that Hitler had made a surprise blitzkrieg without notifying him, or that at least Raeder had seen his game and had sent him off in order to get rid of his first and most dangerous rival. Consequently Doenitz's chronic lack of "cool nerve" had again been exposed, this time in front of the major part of the crew. The tale spread through the German Navy with the mysterious speed, as such tales do, of a native African signal.

Out of the danger, and with his feet on solid ground, the courage of this ersatz sea fighter came back. Count Felix Luckner, captain of the *Seeadler*, the sailing-ship raider of the last war, boasted in public that he had sunk many a ship but had never killed a sailor, and that he was proud of such a record. Doenitz answered—also in public—that he (as a good German) was unable to understand such chivalry of the sea. To men like Adolf Hitler these were "splendid words" (as Count Zeppelin said to the German people who sped him on his pioneer way to raid Great Britain), for the methods of terror were already part of their calculations. And Hitler had received no report on the bearing of the ruthless speaker when he was sweating with fright outside Portland.

Doenitz's close connection with the master of the Luftwaffe made it easy for him to get collaboration in peacetime for perfecting the employment of planes as spotters for submarine flo-

tillas. In production he was influenced by Luftwaffe friends in a totally different way. His unwarlike sensitivity brought him cynical perception. He knew his Goering and the mental limitations which made that fire-eater rather too subjective in his calculations. Courage may have an element of obtuseness. Fear should not master a man, but it is the beginning of intelligence, and Doenitz, who at home could keep his head, saw the potential strength behind Allied unpreparedness. He did not draw the superficial conclusion that the Luftwaffe would always be able to keep enemy aircraft from the German sky. Consequently he relied on the production of the Baltic and North Sea wharfs as little as possible. Submarines, whether small or large, were made in parts all over Germany. The process of final launching needed comparatively little time. Doenitz expected that these ports would be bombarded in due course, and in this, as is known, he was not a bad prophet.

As for man power, Doenitz arranged with the other chiefs of the armed forces that a pool should be formed of 100,000 of the fittest of Germany's youth, reckoning that this number provided an ample reserve for his future wartime needs. He could not see that in future years of war his former friend Hermann Goering would be short of men and would "borrow" heavily from the pool. In personnel matters Doenitz adopted a new scheme. He ordered that no staff should come between himself and the commandant, that each commandant should adopt a "*kameradschaftliche Haltung*" (a comradely behavior) toward his crew, and that class distinction between officers and men should be eliminated completely. He had personal experience of the dangers that may arise in the close quarters of a German U-boat, in a moment of crisis, if the crew have cause to resent the bearing of the officers.

When this war broke out Doenitz's influence increased, but not to the extent he had expected. Raeder's influence was still strong and did not decrease with the successful conclusion of the Norwegian campaign. Doenitz had to bide his time. In the final overthrow of Raeder he pressed searching questions: What

use was a German fleet bottled up in Norwegian fiords? Of what use there was one single surface craft in the strategy of the German High Command? The German fleet had to watch events in the North Sea, to look out for an opportunity when nothing stronger than a British trawler was in the North Sea patrol. When that rare event happened, then the German *Panzerschiffe* and the pocket battleships had a chance for a hit-and-run action, which resulted in a few hours, or days, at sea without any action. All that swimming steel was wasted; all the officers and men were idle. How many more submarines could he build with that material—the human and the steel! The *Graf Spee* and the *Bismarck* spoke volumes. Could Admiral Raeder produce alternative plans? Of course not. The escape of the *Scharnhorst*, the *Gneisenau*, and the *Luetzow* from the French Channel ports was a remarkable achievement of escape. Not a naval battle, but the successful escape of a frightened navy. Was that to go on?

A disappointed Führer gladly listened to a man who promised him success in a sphere which up to 1943 had not brought much glory for the Greater German Reich—unless one was to refer to “Doenitz’s Own” submarines. So Admiral Erich Raeder had to go, and at the beginning of 1943 the much younger Doenitz took over. His appointment was a hit in the faces of scores of other admirals who, as a remedy for an embarrassing personal situation, were immediately dismissed from the service. Doenitz felt the danger that might gather around him from silent resentment. Methods that were strange even in Nazi Germany’s armed forces were officially introduced, and the higher flag officers experienced them first. Admiral Boehm, German naval chief in Norway, was retired immediately and without explanation, to be replaced by Admiral Ciliax, who had commanded the *Scharnhorst*, the *Gneisenau*, and the *Luetzow* in their escape from the Channel. Boehm had more than once spoken out against the German treatment of Norwegians. The Gestapo knew that, of course, and it was part of their foul business to show Doenitz that they knew it. Doenitz relied for his future more upon the support of his old friend Heinrich Himmler than on regular

naval channels. Ciliax was the man for Doenitz, as he was for the Gestapo, a man who in every other country (except Japan) would have been disposed of by law for his personal misconduct. It was essentially as an emissary of the watchful Gestapo that Admiral Fricke went to Italy to represent the interests of the German High Command in the Italian Navy. Probably his presence reinforced the decision that Italian officers had to take when Marshal Badoglio ordered them to join the Allied navies in the Mediterranean. Doenitz has gathered round himself the people who will never remind him of his weaknesses and will gladly support him for the price of another gold ring round their sleeves.

As soon as he became naval commander in chief, Doenitz started a propaganda campaign of his own. Addressing submarine crews, the highest officer of the German Navy emulated Goebbels himself in volubility and gesture. This novelty in the German Navy is only an outward sign of a development that has been growing inside that organization for a long time. Earlier in its existence the German Navy—at first the Imperial German Navy—was eager to copy the customs and the dignity of the British Navy, the "silent service." A German Imperial naval officer who had stood on the quarter-deck and addressed his ship's company with the gesticulation of a market crier would have been retired next day. The naval officer under Admirals Zenker and Raeder was daily reminded that he was a commissioned officer. Officers who behaved like the former Lieutenant Reinhard Heydrich, of the Republican Navy, were dismissed from the service. Inwardly the British standard of reticence and good behavior were laughed at, like the British observance of internationally acknowledged customs of naval courtesy, but the external form was followed. With Doenitz all that went by the board. The German naval officer who sneers at his victims swimming in burning oil, who even rams the lifeboats of a torpedoed tanker with his own U-boat, that type is no longer an exception.

The cruelties of the German Army in Russia and the occupied countries are recorded because there the Germans deal with



From European

GRAND ADMIRAL KARL DOENITZ, who commanded the U-boat fleet but later succeeded to the supreme naval command.



Acme News Pictures, Inc.

ADMIRAL ERICH RAEDER, in charge of the German Navy at the start of the war.



civilians, and sooner or later the facts are published. On the sea enough has leaked out from escaped Allied sailors to show that under the Nazis there is no more of chivalry on the sea than on the land. Under Doenitz there is not much difference between the German field gendarmes of Bryansk and Kharkov and the U-boat commanders in the North Atlantic. Doenitz will leave his mark, but it is the brand of Hitler.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Since the above sketch was completed the German sea arm has experienced many reverses, particularly the checkmating of the U-boats in the battle of the Atlantic and the sinking of the *Scharnhorst*. After the latter defeat it was rumored that Doenitz had been removed from his lofty post, but this was later contradicted. Up to the time of going to press he was still in command, although decidedly not in favor.

IX

Admiral Erich Raeder

The concessions of the weak are the concessions of fear.

Edmund Burke, ON CONCILIATION WITH AMERICA, March 22,

1775.

With his mild eye and kindly, open face, Admiral Erich Raeder would not suggest the German in high command. His appearance and bearing would have been more suited to his father's profession of director of a public school than to the commander in chief of the German Navy. His hair is parted in the center and close cropped at the sides, after the style of the average German schoolmaster. Without his uniform and badges of rank he would be assumed to be a scientific worker, perhaps a surgeon; it is even possible to see in him the padre, especially as he bears a striking facial resemblance to several naval chaplains once under his command. No one would doubt his perception, and his eyes show the kindness born and bred in him, and more characteristic of the northern provinces of his origin than of other parts of Germany.

In temperament there could be no more complete contrast than that between Raeder and the typical Prussian Army Junker general, although, as if conscious of what was expected of him, the former commander in chief would in public try to look grim and determined. Regimentation and discipline, measured by the usual Prussian standards, are not congenial to him, perhaps because he looks for the individuality in other men and respects it. There was in Raeder's features and character the lack of will power reflected in his career.

He early professed the chivalry of the sea, though in his book he violated truth and chivalry together by crediting that glory to the German Navy and denying it to the British. Long before his retirement he had inspired the resumption of ruthless U-boat warfare, scorning all rules in face of British scrupulousness (so conspicuous when the submarine *Salmon* let pass the great target of the *Bremen* in October 1939), and had associated himself fully with Nazi practices. Raeder's fall from his early standards was gradual but finally complete. Unable fully to acquiesce, and without the will to resist, he compromised and compounded with the devil. Germans were cynical. They saw in Raeder the impatience of a weak man, whose mental discomfort when confronted with the forces of brutality was such that he might himself act brutally to get rid of it. On hearing of brutalities committed by his government, sometimes by his own officers, his reaction might correspond to that illustrated by a ponderous story told in higher German naval circles.

It is the year 1945. The Führer and his Reichs Cabinet have recognized that brutality and harshness alone do not work. A Reichs Minister for Popular Kindness is appointed. The morning after his appointment the Minister receives a friend and proceeds according to his function:

Minister: "How are you?"

Friend: "Fairly bad; I have stomach ulcers."

Minister: "How's your wife?"

Friend: "She died yesterday morning."

Minister (very touched and moved): "Oh! I'm very sorry indeed. How's your business?"

Friend: "It went bankrupt last week, and I lost every penny."

Minister (almost in tears): "How are your twelve children?"

Friend: "I lost eleven in the war, and the last one was run over by a tram yesterday and killed."

The Minister then bursts into tears. He calls for a guard and, pointing to his miserable friend, cries out: "Look at this unfortunate man! He breaks my heart. I cannot see him suffer so much. Take him away and shoot him."

If not true, well invented. At times Erich Raeder might well have filled the post of "Reichs Minister for Popular Kindness."

Erich Raeder was born on April 24, 1876, at the small seaside resort of Wandsbeck near Hamburg, a son of Dr. Raeder, director and headmaster of a public school. In the spring of 1894 his father was transferred to the little town of Grünberg in Silesia, where young Erich, who enjoyed the particular attention of his father during his school days, passed his matriculation with honors. Though he had the opportunity of waiting at least half a year before taking any steps in his future career, he applied at once to join the Imperial German Navy. After three years of strict training as a cadet and midshipman he became a naval sublieutenant in 1897.

Families like that of Raeder's had a peculiar interest in the acute political controversies that arose with the inception of the German Imperial Navy. The Reichs Government had to reconcile the Kaiser's strict orders upon the formation of the Navy with conflicting external and internal political problems. Government and military authorities were themselves not at all convinced that a strong navy was in Germany's interest, and Prussian interests, it was thought, were certainly endangered by it. The arch-conservative Junker circles of Prussia argued that no state, however powerful, could concentrate on two branches of the armed forces at one time, that the Reichstag called upon for heavy naval expenditure would restrict outlay upon the Army. They foresaw, too, that a large naval building program would make a clash with Great Britain inevitable. Their ideal international policy would have allowed Prussian Germany to be Britain's sword on the continent, while the British Navy kept open Germany's rear communication with the remainder of the globe.

Opposing this school of thought was a section of the middle class, largely recruited from such families as Raeder's, who thought that the geographical position of the German Reich, the

most important land power in Central Europe, entitled it to free trade overseas and a proper share in colonies. It was to them intolerable that German communications with German colonies or other overseas nations should be under the constant threat, as they saw it, of Britain and her Navy. Hence they said: "Let us build as much as we can as fast as we can, and let us have a 'frisch-fröhlichen' (short and merry) naval war to show England where her limits are." The unlimited imperialism of this class divided it sharply from the Pan-Germanism inspired by the Junkers class, which at that time had no interest in the conquest of British colonies and the possessions of other nations overseas.

The Imperial German Navy therefore built up its naval officers' corps with a different background from that of the Army. The average German naval officer of those times had discipline equal to that of an officer of the Royal Prussian Footguards, with less pretentiousness in a social sense, but extravagant and sensitive on the theme of German colonial expansion and German sovereignty of the seas. A professor of history, speaking in 1931, explained the atmosphere in the young Imperial German Navy with the following simile:

The German Imperial Navy, and in particular its officers, were like people who, though they generally behave quite reasonably and well, go mad at the sight of a green umbrella or a yellow bathing costume. To the naval officers of those days yellow and green were represented by such words as "the British Navy" [and the professor did not use the German translation *Britische Flotte* but used the English], "British Empire" [and again the English word was used], and "*Seegeltung*" [sea power]. These words had a strange mind-confusing effect on an otherwise intelligent corps of young men.

This then was the spiritual world in which a young German Imperial naval officer was brought up.

The year 1903 sees Raeder in the Naval Academy, which he left after two years. In 1906 Raeder was transferred to the information department of the Navy, Department A (foreign countries), dealing with the foreign press and the naval publications *Naval Review* (*Marine Rundschau*) and *Nauticus*. The chief of

personnel of the Imperial German Navy who made the appointment must have been a good psychologist, for though Raeder had fully imbibed the ideas of his circle, he was aware that in other countries, especially in Britain and British overseas possessions, those ideas would arouse suspicion and uneasiness. Clear-headed and responsive to another point of view, he was exactly the man to deal with foreign press questions and to present an acceptable exterior to the many anxious inquirers from other countries who had to be received by the commander in chief of the Imperial German Navy.

Raeder did well. He had an able pen, and his bearing in discussion was composed, if neither eloquent nor demonstrative. In association with foreigners and various types of strangers it was in his favor that he had never learned the habit of heel clicking or the stiff and elaborate bowing of a Prussian cavalry officer. Reward followed quickly. His Imperial Majesty William II himself picked the crew for his yacht the *Hohenzollern*. Commander Raeder was suddenly honored by being appointed its navigation officer.

The Kaiser was a queer being. In Potsdam and at the court of Berlin he fancied himself as the saber-rattling, omnipotent Prussian war lord and the head of all Junkers. As soon as he put on the gold-braided blue of the German grand admiral he tried to show more "liberal" characteristics. His own words were: "I have never felt more English than when I wear my naval uniform." And this innocent remark, an ideal text for Mr. Punch of London, puts his aspiration in a nutshell.

Commander Raeder of the Foreign Press Department had attracted the attention of the all-highest because of the moderate views he put before the foreign press. This moderation had a disarming purpose, but the Kaiser thought it was genuine and that Raeder would make an ideal theater prop for the setting of the yacht *Hohenzollern*.

From 1913 to January 1918 Raeder was the first Admiralty staff officer and chief of staff to the commander in chief of the reconnaissance forces of the German Grand Fleet. In this capac-

ity he took part in the bombardment of the English coast on November 2, 1914, the bombardment of Hartlepool on December 16, 1914, the Battle of the Doggerbank on April 24, 1915, and the Battle of Jutland on May 21, 1916. His immediate superior was Admiral Hipper, and he followed that admiral during the Battle of Jutland from the battle cruiser *Seidlitz* to the *Luetzow*, and later on to the *Hindenburg*. Later Admiral Raeder had officially to fall in line with the general propaganda which claimed the Battle of Jutland—or the Battle of the Skaggerak, as the Germans call it—to be a gigantic German victory. Privately Raeder has agreed that the Battle of Jutland, though it might be considered during certain phases a tactical German success, was a smashing strategical defeat for the Imperial Navy. It is characteristic of Raeder that he held, on such an important question, an official and a private view.

In January 1918 he was made commandant of the cruiser *Köln II*, but was relieved of that command in October of the same year. Though the Imperial German Navy was then cut down from a war strength of several hundred thousand to fifteen thousand, Raeder was not only retained in service but made head of the central department of the German Admiralty. That position he held from December 1918 to March 1920. The motto under which he worked was "Save what you can from the sinking ship," and, in violation of the relevant paragraph of the Treaty of Versailles, much valuable material was retained and stored away.

From 1920 to July 1922 Raeder was head of the Naval Archives and, as such, studied the development of tactical and strategical naval questions during the last war as they affected Germany. Raeder himself has admitted that this study confirmed him in the belief that the German strategy of maintaining a copy of the British Grand Fleet was too expensive and outmoded. He saw the future of Germany's sea power in cruiser warfare and submarines. It was, of course, impossible for him to contemplate anything more, because, though the Army and Navy might circumvent the Treaty of Versailles, the presence of

unauthorized battleships or battle cruisers, had they existed, could not be explained away. What could be done in defiance of the treaty was to retain all plans and documents concerning submarine warfare during the last war. The treaty strictly prohibited this: under her own pledge Germany was neither to have submarine training stations nor were her naval officers to have the apparatus with which to study the technique of submarine warfare.

As for cruiser warfare, Raeder himself published a two-volume work on that question for which the University of Kiel made him a doctor of philosophy (*honoris causa*). On July 1, 1922, Raeder was made a rear admiral, a high rank in the shrunken German Navy. His work at the marine archives had been a distinguished success; as he left them those archives were certainly not lower in quality than those of the Reichswehr, which are probably the best in the world.

From August 1922 to October 1924 Raeder was inspector of training and education of the German Republican Navy, an important appointment, indeed, considering current events. While the strength of the Army was the center of internal strife, with many different political forces aiding the Reichswehr officers in their sinister aims against the government of the day, the problem of the Navy was of a different kind. The mutiny of the German armed forces in the last war started in the Navy, where left-wing influence was out of all comparison higher than in the Army. Indeed, by 1923 the spirit of revolt of 1919 could hardly be said to exist in the Army. If the Navy was to be trained and educated at all in any political sense, the new inspector, Rear Admiral Raeder, certainly could not follow his own early traditions. On the other hand, if, in order to retain his high rank, Raeder had proclaimed himself a Socialist he would have been too obviously false to his known antecedents. Professedly he was a Democrat and a strong believer in the Republic. Here the "stage-prop liberalism" which had aided him to become the navigation officer of the Imperial yacht *Hohenzollern* served him again. Raeder was thus a "Democrat," and a young republic

was grateful for finding at least one white among all the other black sheep. In reality he was nothing of the kind. Under his inspectorate the mental attitude of the naval personnel of the German Reichs Navy was slowly but steadily reconstructed, and the themes on which inspectors and teachers played were revenge for defeat and the wiping out by war of that black spot in German naval memory—the mutiny at Kiel in 1918.

By the time Raeder relinquished his appointment in 1924 to become commanding admiral of the Light Reconnaissance Forces of the North Sea the swing round in opinion inside the German Navy was well under way. The Officers' Corps could breathe more freely in regard to its actions and utterances. A new framework of thinking, social conduct, and behavior was being shaped.

The old Imperial German naval Officers' Corps, of which Raeder was a perfect product, might have been going mad on political questions during the late nineties and the early years of this century, but the members were unselfish among themselves, an unpretentious, clean-living, humane body of men. They had none of the arrogance of the Prussian Junker officer toward civilians. Many of them were interested in modern science, which would sometimes have been considered a crime in crack Prussian regiments then, and their conception of life (always excluding politics) contrasted favorably in many ways with the rest of Germany.

In the young naval officer of 1924, especially after Admiral Raeder had finished his term as inspector of education and training, little of all this was to be found. Only 1,000 out of 200,000 volunteers being needed yearly for replacements in the Navy, the officer became as arrogant, as intolerant and overbearing as his opposite number in the Army.

Here is a significant fact. Two ships of the line, the *Schleswig-Holstein* and the *Hessen*, on maneuvers in the Baltic under the command of an admiral, put into port at a fashionable Baltic seaside resort. The ships arrived at five o'clock in the afternoon; by seven o'clock both ships were decorated and a dinner and

gala reception was ordered. The upper ten thousand of the town's visitors were asked to attend. The hammocks of the crew served as seats for the ladies and gentlemen. The reception finished at three o'clock in the morning, and while the officers went to their cabins, the crew had to stand by on the decks because the hammocks were still needed. When the maneuvers started again at seven o'clock in the morning a minimum of officers attended. At ten o'clock that evening some of the crew were dismissed and could go below for rest. Four years earlier such conduct would have meant a court-martial not only for the admiral and the captains but for the entire officer corps of the two ships down to the smallest lieutenant. In this instance the crew did not dare to relate the story; they had in mind the astronomical figure of volunteers waiting to take their places.

From 1925 to 1928 Vice-Admiral Raeder was head of the Navy Staff of the Baltic Sea. During this time his activities were not scrutinized, though certain left-wing political quarters in Berlin were slowly collecting material against him. When Admiral Zenker, senior flag officer of the German Navy and commander in chief, retired Raeder was appointed in his place by General Groener, then in charge of the whole armed forces of the Reich. Broad-sides of criticism unloaded themselves upon the new nominee, and at a press reception General Groener had to defend the appointment.

Accusation 1. Toward the end of 1927 a certain Captain Erhardt, former naval officer of the Imperial German Navy and ill-famed reactionary and putschist, had published some correspondence between himself and some of his henchmen. It came out in this correspondence that some of the followers of the reactionary and illegal "Organization Consul" had managed to establish themselves in the new Republican Navy. When the illegal "Organization Consul" had to be disbanded it was followed by the "Viking," and the followers of this organization, which was recruited largely from the first one, had secured a number of important posts in the naval recruiting departments in Kiel. These men had done their utmost to infest the Republi-

can Navy with reactionary thought. In some cases they had tried to introduce the program of a National Socialist party.

Groener's Defense. When a Lieutenant Lieder was appointed at Kiel, Vice-Admiral Raeder was not yet in command. As soon as Raeder found out, the lieutenant was dismissed. As soon as Lieder's successor was found out, he was also dismissed. This successor had taken part in Hitler's beer-cellar putsch in Bavaria in 1923.

The answer was unsatisfactory. Nobody in the left-wing press had accused Lieutenant Lieder; the accusation had been a general one. General Groener, who had to defend Raeder with material given to him by the admiral, put up a weak show by silently admitting that first one officer had to be dismissed and then his successor, and that Raeder had not taken the trouble to find out about the political past of the successor. Groener had cited two instances, but it was estimated that at least thirty-five similar cases could be cited in Kiel alone.

Accusation 2. The fashionable Kaiserlicher Yacht Club at Kiel was frequented by officers of the Republican Navy. It ought to have been condemned as at least bad taste for any Republican navy officer to belong to an Imperial Yacht Club, but what upset the stern Republicans of the left-wing press in Berlin most was that whenever cheers for Kaiser Wilhelm II (who by now was living in Doorn in Holland) were called for, the naval officers, whether senior flag officers or young lieutenants, heartily responded.

Groener's Defense. Although it was true that such incidents had happened at that club, the senior naval officer present was Admiral Mommsen and not Raeder (though Raeder was there). The naval officers had demanded an explanation and had taken strong action after the happening. Admiral Mommsen was retired.

Groener tried to portray a situation that had not existed. According to him, while the civilians belonging to this club were cheering madly, the naval officers stood by silently and did nothing at all but, as soon as the cheering was over, protested

sharply against such happenings. In other words, the naval officers had made themselves the protectors and defenders of the German Republic.

Accusation 3. The light cruiser *Berlin* was visited by Prince Henry, a brother of the former Kaiser, and was received by the commandant of the officers' corps of that cruiser with all the honors that would have been given him in Imperial Germany. This was a gross violation of the disciplinary rules and regulations of the Republic, and the cruiser *Berlin* came under the jurisdiction and command of Vice-Admiral Raeder.

Groener's Defense. The commandant of the cruiser had been retired. No action had been taken against Vice-Admiral Raeder because he was away from his post at that time, on holiday, and could not be held responsible for actions that had happened while he was not present.

This was an incredible explanation and overshadowed even the silliness of the first two. It was a fact that Prince Henry had been on board the cruiser. It was equally true that he had been given Imperial honors, and the case was clear. Though the commandant might have been punished, he should not have been retired. The man who should have borne the brunt of criticism and taken the consequences was Admiral Raeder, who by an extremely weak explanation saved his own skin at the expense of the career of a subordinate officer. In marked contrast was the behavior of Raeder's predecessor. Admiral Zenker had asked for his own retirement because a naval officer under his indirect command, Captain Lohmann, had speculated with departmental monies in banks, cinemas, sausage factories, and other undertakings. The official naval report says:

"In harmony with the old soldierly tradition, Admiral Zenker feels himself personally responsible for the transgressions of subordinates. Only his sense of duty caused him to remain at his post until this unedifying affair had been disposed of."

With Admiral Raeder a new "spirit" came into the Navy. Not for him the "old soldierly traditions," especially when they might endanger his personal career.

Raeder was conscious of the fact that Groener's explanations had been weak ones, and at the German Admiralty he set himself to demonstrate that he was in reality of the left wing. In this effort he managed to deceive a number of important politicians. In Berlin society, on the other hand, he was known as a reactionary, if a superficial one. As commander in chief, Baltic Sea, Raeder had issued an order of the day in which he prohibited officers' wives from bobbing or shingling their hair, using rouge or any other cosmetics, wearing short skirts, or having lacquered fingernails. The order was derided, but it was also held to have a serious significance. It was an intrusion as arbitrary as the bullying of their men by officers of the *Schleswig-Holstein* and the *Hessen*, or their demand for exertions that were beyond the duty of the service. The order of the day trespassed upon individual rights and intruded into spheres that were beyond the commander in chief's legal power. Verbal assurances of democratic sympathies did not compensate for reactionary and chauvinistic acts that recalled a naval slogan of the time of Wilhelm II: "For God and the Imperial Navy nothing is amiss."

When Hitler came to power Raeder was assured that the expansion of the Navy could be pressed forward and that interference from foreign nations and governments was unlikely. To Hitler, Raeder was a welcome commander in chief. He was capable, confined his ambition to his own service, and evinced no dangerous thoughts. If Raeder was interested in politics, he showed no disposition to use his position to influence policy. The Führer's knowledge of naval warfare was scanty, and the seasickness to which he was liable aboard ship, even in the calmest weather, did not encourage his familiarity with any branch of the Navy. And, whatever happened, there was no danger that pocket battleships could start or support a putsch in Berlin. The power of the commander in chief of the Navy lay in the Baltic Sea and part of the North Sea. He could hardly influence the shore bases. In fact, though Raeder was not a Nazi, as Hitler knew, his activities were limited by physical facts.

To Raeder the persecution of Jews was nasty and brutish,

but something it was safer to ignore and to take no part in, for or against; and while it was committed it was better to take a summer trip in the Baltic Sea. Had he not prefaced his two volumes on cruiser warfare with the lofty introduction: "May this work provide a memorial to the chivalrous methods of war of the German officers and men in contrast to the many unchivalrous acts of British officers who refused aid to sinking ships and fired on defenseless seamen"? Yet on his desk was a signed photograph of Admiral Jellicoe.

Raeder could lie directly and deliberately, as well as indirectly and more insidiously by closing his eyes to crimes at which he connived by being a high executive of the government that ordered them.

When in 1936 Raeder was offered the rank of a grand admiral he refused it, putting out the story that he considered it inappropriate to accept a rank that had been adopted by Kaiser William, and given by that monarch only to Prince Henry, Tirpitz, and Koester. This was a graceful gesture in the eyes of the German people, who were shown a commander in chief so modest that by his own choice he became, instead of a grand admiral, simply a general admiral, a rank of ancient Dutch origin with no precedent in the German Navy. Naval officers under Raeder's command were more cynical.

The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 brought Raeder and his navy into the international limelight. Raeder was opposed to deep commitments in the Spanish Civil War, and he was one of those who advised moderation. The reason was clear. A German fleet cruising on the east or west coast of Spain would become an easy prey. When during the same year the German steamer *Kamerun* was stopped by the Spanish Republican cruiser *Liberdad*, political circles in Berlin forced Raeder to reinforce the German ships in the Mediterranean and in the Atlantic Ocean. Consequently, altogether sixteen ships, including three pocket battleships, were dispatched. This action, it is known, was taken against the better judgment of Raeder, and he is reported to have tendered his resignation. In fact, he did

not resign, nor was the German naval force in Spanish waters decreased.

The scruples which Raeder had for strategical reasons about the strength of the German forces in Spanish waters did not prevent him from personally ordering the bombardment of Almería as a revenge for the bombing of the *Deutschland* in Ibiza. It was a brutal order, reflecting nothing of the benign liberalism of the former chief of the Foreign Press Department of the Imperial Navy. The "Democrat" had conveniently changed into the fanatical Nazi. The decline of the old Raeder was as rapid as, in the eyes of Hitler, it was pleasing.

In 1937 Raeder was made an honorary member of the National Socialist party, not reluctantly. In contrast to the usual appointments of this kind, he had made confident but urgent application to Hitler to be admitted to the party.

During the last year before the outbreak of this war Raeder was in front of the stage. Again a few small orders given by him drew attention. Some were so-called wartime orders in actual peacetime, according to which:

1. Canteens for officers and men must be closed after 3 A.M.
2. Officers and men must not stand at the bar. They must sit down to drink.
3. No alcohol to be taken immediately before going on duty.
4. No smoking on an empty stomach or during short at-ease periods when on duty, and most emphatically no drinking on duty.
5. No smoking when in uniform in the streets.
6. No smoking in public vehicles.
7. No smoking while driving.

Beyond this, the commander in chief concluded, he did not wish to interfere in the civil life of his officers.

The next was an order published in 1938 but only now enforced. According to this, naval officers were to have a more "military appearance." A German naval officer now presented a bizarre spectacle, for he had to wear blue breeches, black riding boots and spurs, Sam Browne belt, and forage cap. To

the profane, even in Germany, the Navy became "the mounted marine cavalry."

More important orders are seen in addresses which Raeder gave during that year. At the Heroes Remembrance Day on March 13, 1939, when Raeder delivered the oration, the prevailing note was of peace and armaments. After the usual lamentations that misunderstood Germany only cared for peace and only had battleship after battleship and U-boat after U-boat in order to save that peace for the rest of the world, this is what Raeder said:

We dispute no one's right to do what he considers necessary for his own security. We can be neither silent nor negative, however, when without any justification Germany is represented as being the single reason for the present armament race, and as alone possessing the intention of attacking its neighbors. We know that the elements responsible for this are not to be found where they want to drive their nations, that is, on the battlefield, but to the soldiers over there whom we respect as the chivalrous representatives of their countries a soldierly word may be addressed. That is that what Germany wants and needs is peace. That is not just talk; it is proved by many concrete examples. Germany requires for reconstructive work a quiet development extending over many years. . . .

Then the tone changes.

Germany must continue to think of her security. It is the will of the Führer that the German armed forces be strengthened and be always equal to their responsible task, however great the armaments of others. Where a deficiency has appeared it will be remedied. Where there is leeway it will be made good, and no one should believe that German weapons will be found blunt when the German sword is dishonored or German blood spilt. Germany is the protector of all Germans within and without the frontiers. The shots at Almería are proof of that. Germany hits fast and hard.

At the same time Raeder paid tribute to the memory of "our chivalrous opponents who died in the performance of their soldier's duty to their country." He had also ordered Dr. Givens, an official of the War Graves organization, to lay a wreath on

the monument in the Stahnsdorf Cemetery to 1800 British soldiers who died as prisoners of war in Germany. With the appeal for peace to keep other nations quiet, and the warlike threat to compel them to accept German pretensions, Raeder had learned the German political counterpoint and could pass any Nazi test.

A demonstration which bordered on the ridiculous followed. On March 23, 1939, Lithuania had been forced to cede one thousand square miles around Memel to the German Reich, and Raeder invited his Führer to take possession. A seasick Führer on the pocket battleship *Deutschland* was accompanied by a portentous escort consisting of two battleships, scores of light cruisers, and innumerable flotillas of destroyers and torpedo boats. Though the job could easily have been done by land from East Prussia, Raeder was given a chance to act as an impresario on the sea. Serious naval circles criticized him sharply.

On May 20, 1939, Raeder spoke at Brunswick to an assembly of Hitler Youth and said that "capital ships alone are able to win or defend the supremacy of the seas." This important sentence was noted in naval circles by a man called Karl Doenitz, who was the ambitious chief of the German submarine branch. Raeder's struggle had been to keep a balance between the construction of surface craft and submarines, while a strong party within the German Government believed in submarines only.

Another speech made before the National Socialist Party Navy League in Dresden on August 14, 1939, was more explicit in its violence:

"Just as in 1914, states and nations which professed enmity toward us are at work to encircle us so as to cut off the possibilities of existence for the Reich. We all know that these hopes of our opponents, who again, as in 1914, are led by Great Britain, are doomed to disappointment."

Here Raeder came into line with the commander in chief of the German armed forces, Walther von Brauchitsch. Conscious, perhaps, that his utterances on Germany's place in the world had hitherto been lacking in emphasis, he seemed to be playing up to his master at Berchtesgaden, with the special ob-

ject of ensuring his position as commander in chief at the outbreak of hostilities. At any rate that object was attained, and by a Raeder strangely developed from the school director's son.

One of his first acts in the war was to declare that U-boat warfare would be conducted within the strictest limitations of international law and that Germany would not be the first to violate the agreed regulations. Thus when the British liner *Athenia* was sunk without warning Raeder asserted that no German U-boat had been present and that the *Athenia* was sunk on the special orders of the First Lord of the British Admiralty, Winston Churchill, who tried to create bitter feelings against Germany at an early date. Commonplace among German public utterances, to men not familiar with German methods Raeder seemed to be crazy. The explanation of such extravagances is probably that no propaganda goes unheeded everywhere, that something sticks, especially at home. But even Nazi opinion may have found it unconvincing, for soon Raeder thought of a better story with which to prepare his public for unlimited U-boat warfare.

At the beginning of October 1939 Raeder officially informed the naval attaché of the United States of America in Berlin that the American liner *Iroquois* (6,209 tons) with 566 American passengers, including many children, would be sunk. Raeder said that his Intelligence Department had received information that the *Iroquois* would be sunk by the same agencies that were responsible for the loss of the *Athenia*. In the end the ship reached New York harbor safely after it had been provided with a strong escort by United States naval forces. Following his prelude, Raeder claimed that his warning had forced the First Lord of the Admiralty to abstain from his criminal intention. No doubt the German U-boat commander detailed to back up Raeder's story by attacks did not dare face the risk of encountering the strong United States naval patrol.

After that Raeder dropped every pretense; his U-boats preyed where and how they could. In larger naval policy, however, he still maintained that a suitable balance between surface craft and

U-boat construction required a large increase of surface craft, and the expedition against Norway provided him with easy proof. When a German submarine sank the British battleship *Royal Oak* in Scapa Flow, Raeder's plea for big ships, at any rate, seemed to be shaken, but he maintained his position. The critics, conspicuous among them Admiral Doenitz, insisted that with a large surface fleet there would be a repetition of the supine conduct of the German fleet during most of the last war.

With the sinking of the *Graf Spee* at the mouth of the La Plata, Raeder was hard hit. Captain Langsdorff, who committed suicide, was a personal friend of his. But even the wild orders which came directly from Hitler at Berchtesgaden and forced Langsdorff to his desperate fate did not goad Raeder into action. Yet no officer in high command was ever more affronted by dictatorial interference with his right.

(1) Hitler should not have given any operational orders over the head of Raeder; and

(2) the suicide of Langsdorff was a demonstration that might have caused grave unrest in the German Navy.

Yet Raeder is not known to have uttered a word of criticism, and he remained commander in chief of the German Navy.

The general trend of the war moved heavily against Raeder, as against Germany. Setbacks on the battlefield that were conspicuous in themselves became threatening to Nazi hopes in face of a slowing down of production. The German industrial war machine had been geared to produce material for certain forms of war. For example, the Afrika Korps equipment needed not only a war factory's production capacity reckoned merely on its strength of 300,000 men, but far more, probably three times that amount. Because their specialized equipment could be used only in North Africa, it engaged a disproportionate amount of Germany's production capacity. When Africa fell to the Allies this specialization in the factories became useless, and the industrial effort absorbed by it had to be switched over to the production of material for war on the European continent. It was a severe check.

Further delay followed the enforced evacuation of the Ruhr and Rhineland after the R.A.F. raids. Factories were paralyzed for periods up to six months. Frequently the German railways proved the bottleneck; trucks loaded with important machinery for a war factory might have to cruise about in Germany for months, stopping completion of a factory in Moravia or Austria. Then the Luftwaffe had made serious miscalculations. Hitler, with growing confidence in his dream that Rommel would be able to link with the Japanese somewhere in India, interfered directly with the production schemes of the German plane industry and caused a greater proportion of transport planes to be built. After the fighting in Tunisia was over a specialized industrial effort again lost its purpose. Surprising as it may seem at first sight, all these miscalculations piled up in embarrassment for Raeder. Critics blamed him for draining man power, raw material, and facilities of production in keeping up and even extending a surface fleet, which, though small, was costly out of proportion to its use in the war. Why had he not concentrated on submarines? What had his surface fleet to show in progress toward victory? How far did the German surface fleet influence British naval operations in the North Sea and in the North Atlantic?

Doenitz, the insatiable submarine chief, calculated that if the man power employed in the paralyzed surface fleet and in its wharf and dock facilities were transferred to submarine construction, he could have tripled the submarine strength of 1941. In his addresses to crews of returning submarines on the Atlantic coast he inveighed openly against the wasteful policy of the commander in chief. Doenitz's machinations went further. A rather crestfallen Führer, conscious of having himself committed the main blunders of the war, was glad to find a scapegoat by dismissing one of the chiefs of his armed forces. At least Doenitz promised plenty of action, and whether such action would be successful and influence the general strategy of the war was of less interest, as long as the attention of the German people was diverted from the reverses and strategical withdrawals of the

Army. Even the smallest news item from the Navy would have the stimulus of change and would be welcomed by more than one government department as a relief in the theme of its propaganda.

But perhaps the decisive stroke against Raeder was delivered by Himmler, who had more confidence in his friend Karl Doenitz than in the onetime "Democrat" Raeder. Though Raeder had made frantic efforts to contact Himmler and to become one of his inner circle (like Von Ribbentrop and Keitel), he had failed because Himmler did not trust him. And against Himmler even the commander in chief of the Navy was powerless in the year 1943.



Index

- Afrika Korps, operations in North Africa, 67, 69, 83, 211
 Albania, occupied by Italy, 130
 Alexander, Gen. Sir Harold Rupert Leofric George, in pursuit of Rommel, 88-89
 Anti-Comintern Axis Pact, 101, 129
 Armament in the Reich, 53-54
 Armistice, 5, 93, 184
 Army Peace Commission, 163
 Aschenkamp, of the "Regiment von Senden," accused of murder, 168
Athenia, British liner, sunk, 210
 Austria occupied, 79
 Automobile Exhibition in Berlin, 129
 Badoglio, Marshal Pietro, orders Italian officers to join Allied navies, 192
 Balbo, Gen. Italo, 80, 101, 130
 Battle of Britain, defeat of the Luftwaffe, 106; 104, 107
Battle of Britain, The, official government publication, 106
 Bauer, Col. Max, 4
 Beck, Gen. Ludwig, chief of the German General Staff, 16, 134
 Beer Hall Putsch, 76, 203
 Benn, Lt., of the "Regiment von Senden," accused of murder, 168
Berlin, German cruiser, 204
Berliner Tageblatt, German newspaper, 94
 Berndt, Lt. Alfred Ingomar, his broadcast of Rommel's activities, 86-87
 Bismarck, Georg von, specialist on Panzers, 83; in North African campaign, 84
Bismarck, German battleship, launched, 129; 191
 Black Reichswehr, 167, 169-70
 Blaskowitz, Gen. Johannes, 16, 33, 59
 Blomberg, Gen. Werner von, his marriage causes stir in Army, 22-24, 27; 6, 11-14, 20, 31
 Bock, Field Marshal Fedor von, his invasion of Poland, 58; in the Russian campaign, 60-62, 64; sketch of his career, 154 *et seq.*; 16, 28, 124, 138
 Bock, Gen. Moritz von, father of Fedor, 156
 Bodelschwingh, Adelheid von, *see* Fritsch, Georg von
 Bodungen, Baron von, in the Rossbach Brigade, 170-71
 Boehm, Admiral Fritz, replaced as German naval chief in Norway, 191
 Boulogne, Allied commando raid, and German courts-martial, 64-65
 Bracht, Ernst, Reich Minister of the Interior, 48
 Brauchitsch, Gen. Bernard von, and Charlotte von Gordon, parents of the field marshal, 113
 Brauchitsch, Manfred von and Harald von, nephews of the field marshal, in

- fight with Youth Leader von Schirach, 127
- Brauchitsch, Field Marshal Walther Heinrich Alfred Herman von, put on court of honor to hear Von Fritsch, 32; sketch of his career, 111 *et seq.*; his reproof of Hitler, 123; his order on feeding the German soldier, 124-25; divorce and remarriage, 126-27; inspects North African area, 130; tenders his resignation, 133; his dismissal, 139-44; 30, 33-36, 57, 79-80, 150, 153, 179-81, 209
- Braun, Otto, Prime Minister of Prussia, 48; surrenders in revolt, 49
- Bremen*, German ship, 195
- Breslau*, commanded by Doenitz, 183, 185
- Breslauer Volkswacht*, Silesian newspaper, 7
- Brückner, Wilhelm, A.D.C. to Hitler, 28, 77
- Brüning, Dr. Heinrich, German chancellor, deposed by Von Hindenburg, 48
- Buchholtz, Lt., of Kuestrin Fortress, 168-69
- Buchrucker, Major Ernst, and his Black Reichswehr, 167-70; writes book, *In Seeckt's Shadow*, 173
- Budenny, Marshal Semyon Nikolayevich, Red Army commander, 60-61
- Bülow, Gen. Karl von, at Battle of the Marne, 135
- Caesar cited, 139
- Caporetto, defeat of the Italians at, 72
- Caucasus, battle for, 65
- Chamberlain, Joseph, cited, 140
- Chamberlain, Neville, Prime Minister of England, son of Joseph, 57
- Christiansen, Gen. Friedrich, military governor of the Netherlands, 65
- Churchill, Winston Spencer, accused by Germans of ordering the sinking of the British liner *Athenia*, 210
- Ciano, Count Galeazzo, Italian Foreign Minister, 131
- Ciliax, Admiral Otto, made German naval chief in Norway, 191-92
- Circus Busch, and demonstration against German Government, 15
- Clausewitz, Gen. Karl von, 143, 180
- Coburg, Rommel's "play at strategy," 74-75
- Commando raid on Boulogne, and German courts-martial, 64-65
- Condor Legion (German), in Spanish Civil War, 20
- Confucius quoted, 145
- Coup d'état* in Prussia, 49-50
- Creuzburg, Herr, German deputy, 9
- Cruewell, Gen. Ludwig, supply chief in North African campaign, 84
- Czechoslovakia, invasion of, 128
- Daladier, Édouard, French War Minister, 32
- Danzig Air Mail Service, 94
- Danziger Luftpost, 94
- Darré, Walther, 13
- Davison, Sir William, 166
- Denmark attacked, 105
- "Desert Corps," 81; renamed the Afrika Korps, 83
- Deutschland*, bombed by Spanish Republicans, 207; 209
- Dittmar, Gen. Kurt, spokesman of the German High Command, 141
- Dobroserdov, Gen., of the Red Army, 61
- Doenitz, Grand Admiral Karl, sketch of his career, 183 *et seq.*; his simulation of lunacy in prison camp, 185; replaces Raeder, 191; 209, 211-13
- Doggerbank, Battle of the, 199
- Dollman, Gen., 64
- Doorn Castle, ex-Kaiser receives birthday congratulations from Von Fritsch, 25; 203
- Eberhardt, Magnus F. W. von, 5
- Eckener, Dr. Hugo, constructor of zeppelins, 96
- Eighth Army, in North African campaign, 85, 87, 89
- El Agheila, defeat of Rommel at, 67, 89
- El Alamein, Rommel defeated at, 88
- "Elizabetheth," German guards regiment, 114

- Epp, Gen. Franz, Ritter von, 25, 75-77, 80
- Erhardt, Capt., former German naval officer, 202
- Erinnerungen des Kronprinzen Wilhelm*, memoirs of the Crown Prince, quoted, 162
- Evacuation des Pays Baltiques par les Allemands, L'*, by Gen. Niessel, quoted on the character of Von Fritsch, 5
- Falkenhayn, Gen. Erich von, 116
- Faupel, Gen., 25
- Feme murder trials, 167, 174
- Fischer, Adelheid, mother of Gen. von Rundstedt, 42
- Franchet d'Esperey, Gen. Louis Félix Marie, of the French Army, 135
- Franco, Gen. Francisco, and the Spanish Civil War, 20
- François-Poncet, André, French Ambassador to Germany, 32
- Frederick II, his leaning toward French culture, 156
- Frederick William I, father of Frederick II, 156
- Fricke, Admiral Kurt, in Italy as Gestapo emissary, 192
- Fritsch, Georg von, and Adelheid von Bodelschwingh, parents of Werner, 2
- Fritsch, Col. Gen. Baron Werner von, sketch of his career, 1 *et seq.*; his character described by Gen. Niessel, 5; his plan for attack on Poland, 10; his help to financial and industrial leaders, 14-16; gibes at Gen. Milch's Aryanism, 22; declares Hitler intended taking Austria and Czechoslovakia, 24; his opinion of Gen. Keitel, 28; arrested by Gestapo guards, 29; faces court of honor with telegram of his "death," 32-33; reported killed in action but in reality assassinated, 35-36, 38, 180; his dismissal as commander in chief, 123; 40-41, 44, 57-58, 70, 122, 124, 128-29, 133, 140, 150, 175-76, 178
- Funk, Walther, in German Propaganda Ministry, 21
- Gamelin, Gen. Maurice Gustave, 135
- Geneva Convention, 185
- Geopolitics of Prof. Haushofer, 76
- "German Freedom party," 15
- Gessler, Dr. Otto, Reichswehr Minister, 6, 168-69
- Gestapo, German secret police, 15; interference with freedom of religious worship, 24
- Ghaedicke, Corp., attempt on his life, 169
- Givens, Dr., of the British War Graves Commission, 208
- Gneisenau, German warship, escapes from French Channel port, 191
- Goebbels, Joseph, whispering campaigns against Von Fritsch, 32; Von Fritsch demands his immediate dismissal, 34; campaign against Von Brauchitsch, 126-27; 13, 20, 22, 36, 61, 64-65, 69, 82, 84, 86, 90, 100, 132, 137, 141, 151, 192
- Goeben, German warship, 183
- Goering, Hermann, congratulates Von Blomberg on his marriage, 23; president of court of honor to hear Von Fritsch's defense, 32; Von Fritsch demands his dismissal, 34; enters Austria as German Air Minister, 177; 12-13, 20, 33, 36, 52, 74-75, 94, 96-102, 106-08, 186-87, 190
- Goetz, Herr von, father-in-law of Von Rundstedt, 42
- Goltz, Gen. Count Rudiger von der, 5
- Gordon, Charlotte von, mother of Field Marshal von Brauchitsch, 113
- Graf Spee*, German warship, 191; sunk, 211
- Graziani, Gen. Rudolfo, defeated in North Africa, 83
- Great Britain, her economic power the cause of Germany's defeat, in the opinion of Von Rundstedt, 42
- Groener, Gen. Wilhelm von, his demand on Kaiser to abdicate, 162; appoints Raeder senior flag officer in Navy, 202; 203-05
- Gronau, Hans Wolfgang von, German air attaché in Tokyo, 102-03
- Grünn, Erica, marries Gen. von Blomberg, 23-24

- Grzesinski, Albert Carl Wilhelm, president of Berlin police, 48; surrenders in revolt, 49
- Guderian, Gen. Heinz, 16, 138, 151
- Gudovius, Col., of Kuestrin Fortress, 168-69
- Guinness, Lt. Col. Walter Edward, his report on ammunition surrendered by Germany and destroyed, 165-66
- Gutknecht, Capt., of the "Regiment von Senden," accused of murder, 168
- Halder, Gen. Franz, chief of German General Staff, 180
- Hammerstein-Equord, Gen. Günther Edmund Werner von, 12-13
- Hartlepool, bombarded, 199
- Hasse, Lt. Gen. Paul, 43
- Haushofer, Prof. Karl, his geopolitics, 75-77
- Heines, Lt., accused of complicity in attempted murder, 169; police president of Breslau, 170
- Helena, Queen of Italy, 151
- Henry, Prince, brother of the Kaiser, 204, 206
- Heroes Remembrance Day, in Germany, Raeder's oration quoted, 208
- Hess, Rudolf, 12, 19, 36
- Hessen*, German ship of the line, 201, 205
- Heydrich, Reinhard, security officer of the Gestapo, 13, 15-16, 20-22, 28; put against a wall with his arms up, 29-30; his plan to remove Von Fritsch by "fatal accident" fails, 33; his immediate execution without trial demanded by Von Fritsch, 34; 32, 58, 192
- Heye, Gen. Wilhelm, succeeds Von Seeckt as commander in chief, 8; his demand on Kaiser to abdicate, 162
- Himmler, Heinrich, chief of the Gestapo, 13, 15, 19-22, 28; put against a wall with his arms up, 29-30; scheme to remove Von Fritsch by "fatal accident" fails, 33; dismissal and trial demanded by Von Fritsch, 34; 32, 82, 100, 122, 137, 153, 191, 213
- Hindenburg, Field Marshal Paul von, deposed Brüning as chancellor, 48; his responsibility for Prussian revolt, 49; his demand on Kaiser to abdicate, 162; 13
- Hindenburg*, German battleship, 199
- Hipper, Admiral Franz von, in Battle of Jutland, 199
- Hitler, Adolf, 12 *passim*; his fear of assassination, 27; letter to Von Fritsch, 31; explanation of shooting of Roehm, 32; reproved by Von Brauchitsch, 123; abolishes church service in the Army, 128
- Hitler Youth, 78, 209
- Hohenzollern, House of, 9
- Hohenzollern*, Kaiser's yacht, under command of Raeder, 198, 200
- Horst Wessel song, 34
- Hugenberg, Alfred, 47
- Imperial Japanese Army Air Force, 101
- Infantry Attacks*, by Rommel, placed on official army list, 79
- In Seeckt's Shadow*, by Major Buchrucker, 173
- Inter-Allied Commission of Military Control, 5, 164-67, 170
- Iroquois*, American liner, warning of its intended sinking, 210
- Janke, Lt., believed himself poisoned, 168
- Jellicoe, Admiral Sir John Rushworth, 206
- Jews, persecution of, 205-06
- Jodl, Gen. Alfred, on Hitler's personal staff, 141, 182
- Joffre, Gen. Joseph Jacques Césaire, 134-35
- Junkers, at Dessau, making air liners, 95
- Junkers Air Traffic Co., 94
- Jutland, Battle of, 199
- Kaiserlicher Yacht Club, at Kiel, 203
- Kaldrack, Col., of the Rossbach Brigade, 170-71
- Kamerun*, German steamer, stopped by Spanish Republican cruiser *Liberdad*, 206

- Katte, Lt., friend of Frederick II, executed, 156
- Keitel, Hans, son of the general, killed in action, 152
- Keitel, Field Marshal Wilhelm, sketch of his career, 145 *et seq.*; "the comic-strip general," 151; 22, 27-28, 30, 33, 35, 66, 124, 129, 133-34, 178, 213
- Keith, Lt., friend of Frederick II, 156
- Kesselring, Gen. Albert, promoted to field marshal, 105; 107
- Kesselring, Field Marshal Karl, in North African campaign, 84, 109
- Kiev, captured, 61
- Klapproth, Sgt. Major Erich, accused of attempted murder, 169-70
- Kleist, Gen. Paul Ludwig Ewald von, wins Battle of Uman, 60; defeated at Rostov, 62, 66, 114; 28, 147
- Kluck, Gen. Alexander von, at Battle of the Marne, 135
- Koch, Erich, Gauleiter of East Prussia, 121
- Kochenhausen, Gen. von, 58
- Koester, Admiral Hans Ludwig Raimund, 206
- Köln II, German cruiser, 199
- Kothe-Hoth, Gen. Hermann, in the Russian campaign, 64
- Kreipe, Major, 103-04
- Kressenstein, Gen. Kress von, 28, 30, 47
- "Kronprinz," army group, 161
- Kuestrin Fortress, 168
- Langsdorff, Capt. Hans, of the *Graf Spee*, commits suicide, 211
- Lanrezac, Gen. Charles Louis, of the French Army, 135
- Laval, Pierre, 66-67
- Lavanzelles, Charles, French writer, 5
- Leeb, Gen. Wilhelm, Ritter von, in Russian campaign, 62; 16, 28, 30, 76, 124, 138, 175, 179, 181
- Ley, Robert, 19
- Liberdad*, Spanish Republican cruiser, stops German steamer *Kamerun*, 206
- Lieder, Lt., dismissed from German Navy, 203
- Lincoln, Abraham, cited, 140
- List, Gen. Siegmund Wilhelm Walther, helps stop rout of Germans before Moscow, 181; 28
- Lithuania, forced to cede territory to Germany, 209
- Lloyd-Ostflug, first civil air company in eastern Germany, 94
- Loebe, Paul, president of the Reichstag, 7
- Lohmann, Capt., naval officer, speculated with department money, 204
- Luckner, Count Felix, captain of the *Seeadler*, 189
- Ludendorff, Gen. Erich von, his demand on Kaiser to abdicate, 162; 4
- Luetzow*, German warship, escapes from French Channel port, 191; German battleship, in Battle of Jutland, 199
- Lufthansa Ltd., 94-96
- Lutz, Gen., 16
- Mackensen, Gen. August von, rebuked Hitler, 37; 72, 141
- Maginot Line, broken, 82, 136
- Manchester Guardian*, quotes letter attacking Nazis, smuggled out of Germany, 143-44
- Mannstein, Gen. Fritz Erich von, in the Russian campaign, 64
- Mareth Line, defeat of Rommel, 67, 89-90
- Marne, Battle of the, cited by Von Brauchitsch, 134-36
- Marx, Karl, 45
- Maunoury, Gen. Michel Joseph, of the French Army, 135
- Meissner, Otto Lebrecht Eduard, German Secretary of State, 21
- Messe, Gen. Giovanni, Italian officer in North Africa, 89-90
- Milch, Field Marshal Erhard, Gen. von Fritsch's gibe on him, 22; sketch of his career, 92 *et seq.*; 24, 134, 186
- Moltke, Helmuth von, Jr., cancels Kaiser's order, 116
- Moltke, Gen. Helmuth Carl Bernhard, Count von, 38
- Mommsen, admiral of the German Navy, 203
- Montgomery, Gen. Bernard Law, in pursuit of Rommel, 88-89

- Moscow, Battle of, 181
 Mussolini, Benito, forced by Von Rundstedt to make changes in Italian Army, 67; 83, 105, 129-30, 150-51
 Mutiny of German armed forces, 200-01
- Nadolny, Rudolph August von, German diplomat, 13
 Napoleon cited, 139; defeats of Jena and Auerstadt, 164
 National Socialist Flying Corps (N.S.F.K.), 97
 National Socialist Government, its aims, 52
Nauticus, a publication, 197
Naval Review (Marine Rundschau), a publication, 197
 Nehring, Gen. Walther, 16
 Neurath, Baron Konstantin von, "protector" of Czechoslovakia, 128
 Nielsen, Major, 103
 Niessel, Gen. Henri Albert, his book *L'Evacuation des Pays Baltiques par les Allemands* quoted on Von Fritsch, 5, 19
 Norway, its invasion considered, 24-25, 134; attacked, 105-06
 Noske, Gustav, War Minister of the Weimar Republic, 5
- Œuvre, L'*, French newspaper, 20
 Ossietzky, Karl von, tortured to death in concentration camp, 171-72
- Panier, private soldier, murdered, 168
 Papen, Franz von, assumes chancellorship of Germany, 11; appointed by Von Hindenburg, 48-49; 22, 28, 33-34
 Pariani, Gen. Alberto, Italian Secretary of State, 129
 Paulus, Gen. Friedrich von, in the Russian campaign, 64
 Peace Conference (1919), 172
 Pearl Harbor, Japanese attacks on, 103
 Pétain, Marshal Henri Philippe, signs armistice with Hitler, 147; 66-67
 "Phantom Division," of Panzers, 82
- Pienaar, Gen. Dan, his opinion of Rommel, 88
 Poland, its conquest, 58-59, 82, 133-34, 152, 179
 Polish Air Force, 104
 Polt, Lt. Col., 103
 Popitz, Eduard Hermann Johannes, Prussian Finance Minister, 21
 Pour le Mérite, bestowed on Rommel, 73, 89; on Ernst Udet, 99; on Von Bock, 160
 Prussia, government overturned by military, 48-50
- Raeder, Admiral Erich, replaced by Doenitz, 191; sketch of his career, 194 *et seq.*; his oration on Heroes Remembrance Day quoted, 208; 20-21, 64, 186-90, 192
 R.A.F., in World War II, 84, 104, 212
 Rathmann, of Kuestrin Fortress, 168-69
 Ravenstein, Gen. Johann von, in North African campaign, 84
 Rearmament, in Germany, 164
 Regia Aeronautica, of Italy, 101
 "Regiment von Senden," 168
 Reichenau, Gen. Walther von, 16, 20, 28, 150
 Reinhardt, Gen. Walther, names his successor as general of infantry, 46-47
 Revel, Admiral Paolo Thaon di, Italian Minister of Finance, 130
 Rhineland reoccupied by German Army, 17-19
 Ribbentrop, Joachim von, his handling of German foreign affairs, 57, 80, 129, 131-32, 137, 153, 178, 213; 36
 Richthofen, Hartmann, Baron von, 8
 Richthofen, Manfred, Baron von, German aviator in World War I, 100
 Roberts, Frederick Sleight, Lord Roberts, 155
 Roehm, Capt. Ernst, chief of storm troopers in Germany, 12; murdered, 13-14; his shooting explained by Hitler, 32; 52, 100
 Rommel, Field Marshal Erwin Eugen Johannes, his operations in North Africa, 67; sketch of his career, 69

- et seq.*; wins Iron Cross, 71-72; decorated with the Pour le Mérite, 73, 89; his concern with Panzers, 77; his book *Infantry Attacks* placed on official army list, 79; receives Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross, 83; reverse at El Alamein, 88; 58, 142, 177, 212
- Roszbach, Lt., 170
- Roszbach Brigade, court records on its officers quoted, 170-71
- Rostov, defeat of Von Kleist, 62, 66, 114
- Royal Oak*, British battleship, sunk by German submarine, 211
- Rueffer, Herr, father of Von Brauchitsch's second wife, 126
- Rundstedt, Field Marshal Karl Rudolf Gerd von, sketch of his career, 39 *et seq.*; in *coup d'état* in Prussia, 49-50; quoted on cause of downfall of German Imperial Army in 1918, 56; captures Warsaw, 58; in Russian campaign, 60-62; takes Kiev, 61; his order of the day on looting among the soldiery, 63; his courts-martial after the Allied commando raid on Boulogne, 64-65; dealings with the Vichy Government as resident general in France, 66-67; his break through the Maginot Line, 82; his characterization of Rommel, 90; his description of Keitel, 152-53; stops rout before Moscow, 181; 16, 20, 28-29, 33, 70, 124, 138, 150, 175, 179-80
- Ruskin, John, on war, 146
- Russia, campaign against, by Germany, 122, 137; its failure, 139
- Russo, Gen. Alfio, Italian Minister of War, 130
- Russo-Finnish War (1939-40), 138
- Saar plebiscite, 17
- Saarbrücken, occupied, 19
- St. Valéry-en-Caux, Rommel captures large British force at, 82
- Salmon*, submarine, 195
- Seeborn*, German warship, escapes from French Channel port, 191; sunk, 1937.
- Schirach, Baldur von, Reich Youth Leader, his fight with Von Brauchitsch's nephews, 127
- Schirrmann, of the "Regiment von Senden," accused of murder, 168
- Schleicher, Gen. Kurt von, and his wife, assassinated, 14, 52; his influence for Von Rundstedt, 47; took over chancellorship from Von Papen, but forced to retire, 50-51; his boast as "Socialist General," 121; in Roszbach Brigade, 170; 48
- Schleswig-Holstein*, German ship of the line, 201, 205
- Schlieffen, Gen. Alfred, Count von, 38
- Schlieffen Plan, 135, 137
- Schlotheim, Baroness von, mother-in-law of Gen. von Rundstedt, 42
- Schmidt, Gen. Arthur, in North African campaign, 84
- Schmidt, Charlotte, marries Von Brauchitsch, 126-27
- Schmidt, Willie, murdered soldier, 170
- Schroeder, Admiral Ludwig von, called "The Lion of Flanders," 149
- Schulenburg, Count Frederick von der, Prussian chief of staff, 161-62
- Schultz, Lt., accused of instigating murder, 169-71
- Seeadler*, German raider, 189
- Seeckt, Gen. Hans von, commander in chief of the Reichswehr, 6, 167; dismissed, 9; considered invasion of Norway, 25; his description of Prussian generals, 31; 10, 37, 40, 72
- Senden, Karl Otto, Baron von, accused of murder, 168
- Severing, Karl, Prussian Minister of the Interior, 48; surrenders in revolt, 49
- Skagerrak, Battle of the, 199
- Spanish Civil War, 20, 102, 188, 206
- Sperrle, Gen. Hugo, promoted to field marshal, 105, 107-08
- Stalingrad, Battle of, 65, 181-82
- Stein, of the "Regiment von Senden," accused of murder, 168
- Stoyadinovitch, Milan, Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, declares his leaning toward the Axis, 130

- Stresemann, Dr. Gustav, German chancellor, 168
- Strücken, Herr, Socialist deputy, 7-8
- Stülpnagel, Gen. Joachim von, 48, 162
- Stumma, Gen. Georg von, in North African campaign, 84
- Stumpf, Lt. Gen., 103
- Teruzzi, Gen. Attilio, Italian Minister for Colonies, 130
- Thom, of Kuestrin Fortress, 168-69
- Thoma, Gen. Ritter von, in North African campaign, 84, 88
- Thuringia, military occupation of, 43, 51, 63
- Tiedemann, Lt. Otto von, war correspondent, 87
- Timoshenko, Marshal Semyon Konstantinovich, victor at Rostov, 114; 61
- Tirpitz, Admiral Alfred von, 206
- Treaty of Versailles, repudiation proposed by Hitler, 17; its limitation on German Army, 164-65; 6, 96-97, 119, 172, 186, 199
- Tripoli, defeat of Rommel, 67
- Tropical Disease Institute, in Hamburg, 81
- Tschirmer, Gen. Georg von, in Italian operations in North Africa, 79-80
- Tuchachevsky, Mikhail Nikolayevich, Soviet marshal, executed, 21
- U-25, in command of Doenitz, 184
- U-37, with Doenitz aboard, forced to surface by British destroyer *Wolfhound*, 189
- UB-68, in command of Doenitz, 184
- Udet, Ernst, German airman, 99-100, 102
- Uman, Battle of, capture of Russian troops, 61-62
- University of Kiel, makes Raeder a doctor of philosophy, 200
- Valle, Gen. Giuseppe, Italian Under-Secretary for Air, 101
- Verdun offensive, 116-17
- Vuillemin, Gen. Joseph, French air chief, 103
- Wall Street slump (1929), 120
- Warlimont, Col. Karl, military adviser to Hitler, 27, 182
- Warsaw taken, 58
- Wavell, Gen. Sir Archibald Percival, defeats Graziani, 83
- Weiss, Dr., vice-president of Berlin police, 49
- Weninger, Gen., German air attaché in Britain, 104
- Wessel, Horst, called "that libertine" by Von Fritsch, 34
- Wetzell, Gen. Georg, 11
- Wever, Gen., 98
- Who's Who* (German), on Von Brauchitsch, 120
- Wilhelm II, German Kaiser, receives birthday congratulations at Doorn from Von Fritsch, 25; his interference in army moves, 115-16, 140; abdication demanded, 162; his yacht *Hobenzollern*, 198; 149, 196, 203, 205-06
- Wolfhound*, British destroyer, forces U-37, with Doenitz aboard, to the surface, 189
- World War I, 3-5, 11, 37, 92
- World War II, 119, 172
- Yamashito, Gen. Tomoquki, in command of Japanese Army Air Force, 102
- Zenker, Admiral Hans, considered invasion of Norway, 25; asks retirement, 204; 186, 192, 202
- Zeppelin, Count Ferdinand von, 189
- Zhukov, Marshal Gregory, in Battle of Moscow, 181











